PARTISAN REVIEW

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER, 1941

Genesis of "Swann"

a biographical study of Proust

ALFRED VIGNERON

Kulturbolschewismus

the meaning of Mr. Brooks' speech

DWIGHT MACDONALD

WILLIAM PHILLIPS
The Intellectuals' Tradition

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10 Propositions and 8 Errors

J. MAYHALL
The Good Samaritan (a story)

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Kulturbolschewismus Is Here

Dwight Macdonald

IN THE PERIOD of reaction we are living through, it is peculiarly unfortunate that, as Dos Passos remarks in the introduction to his latest book, "Americans as a people notably lack a sense of history." For the modern intellectual needs a sixth sense if he is to survive—the historical sense. Confronted by a frustrating historical situation—the breakdown of the political, social and cultural values of the bourgeois order, and the simultaneous impotence of any progressive revolutionary force to sweep clear the debris—our intellectuals have for the most part either tried to find their way back to the long discredited values of the bourgeoisie, or else have begun to move towards a totalitarian "solution." But for the values they instinctively want to preserve, both roads lead to historical dead-ends.

The swing back to bourgeois values has been up to now much the stronger. It has caught up almost all the old intellectual leaders of the left wing. Lewis Corey, whom we once looked to as the outstanding Marxist economist, has discovered "the industrial capitalist virtues—however imperfectly realized—of production for welfare, democracy and peace" (*Nation*, May 19, 1941). Louis M. Hacker, once the "coming" Marxist historian, has also discovered the virtues of "industrial" as against "finance" capitalism (as Hitler did years ago) and now regards Rockefeller as "a great industrial innovator" who "conformed to the pattern of the enterpriser of classical economics" (*Nation*, Dec. 7, 1940). Sidney Hook, once the leading Marxist philosopher, has swung away from Marx towards John Dewey and celebrates all kinds of extremely vague beauties in capitalist bourgeois democracy (*New Leader*, passim.). John Dos Passos, the "irresponsible" chronicler of the last war, flies to England, fittingly accompanied by Thornton Wilder, to help the bellicose P.E.N. Club win this one. Max Eastman, the hero of the old *Masses* trial, the gay rebel, the original American Trotskyite, writes war propaganda and publishes an

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attack on socialism which Wendell Willkie implores every good American to read and which is the low-water mark to date in such affairs for vulgarity and just plain silliness (*Readers Digest*, June, 1941).

This tendency is nothing new, nor is it of itself especially dangerous, since the values these writers are trying to revive are quite beyond the aid of their oxygen tanks. In this article I want to analyze the other and newer and much more ominous tendency, which seems to me most significantly expressed to date in a recent paper of Van Wyck Brooks—the tendency to rally to the concepts of Hitler's (and Stalin's) "new order." Another manifestation is James Burnham's book, *The Managerial Revolution*, on which I shall have something to say next issue.

Van Wyck Brooks' speech* was a Dadaist gesture in reverse. Dadaist in the furious invective, the wild statements, the general air of provocative hyperbole; only the madly ringing alarm clocks to interrupt the speaker and the stench bombs to drive out the audience were lacking. In reverse because the apparatus was turned *in defense of* bourgeois-Philistine values. The comparison is unfair to the Dadaists, whose antics were both logical and deliberate. Brooks was apparently serious in his clowning.

The paper is built around an antithesis between "primary" and "secondary" writers. The former is "a great man writing," "one who bespeaks the collective life of the people" by celebrating "the great themes . . . by virtue of which the race has risen—courage, justice, mercy, honor, love." He is positive, constructive, optimistic, popular. He believes in "the idea of progress." Above all, he is primary. The "secondary," or "coterie," writer, on the other hand, is a thin-blooded, niggling sort of fellow, whose work reaches "a mere handful of readers." His stuff has brilliant "form" but lacks "content." He is "a mere artificer or master of words," who perversely celebrates the "death-drive" instead of the "life-drive." He is a doubter, a scorner, a sceptic, expatriate, highbrow and city slicker. His work is pessimistic and has lost contact with The People and The Idea of Greatness. He is, above all, secondary.

*"Primary Literature and Coterie Literature," a paper delivered at the Second Annual Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion, at Columbia University, New York City, on September 10, 1941. I am indebted to Dr. Louis Finkelstein, of the Conference, for a copy of the paper and of Thomas Mann's letter of comment.

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Brooks does not hesitate to name names, as follows.* *Primary:* Tolstoi, Milton, Erasmus, Dickens, Rabelais, Dostoievsky, Socrates, Goethe, Ibsen, Whitman, Hugo, Emerson, Whittier, and Thomas Mann. (Critics: Arnold, Taine, Renan, Sainte-Beuve.) *Secondary:* Joyce, Proust, Valéry, Pound, Eliot, James, Dryden, Nietzsche, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Farrell, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Gertrude Stein. (Critics: Eliot, Richards, Winters, Pound, Tate, Ransom.)

This is childishness, ignorance, nonsense, what you please, but it is unhappily symptomatic of much more than Brooks' own mentality. It is the boldest statement to date of that cultural counter-revolution opened by Archibald MacLeish's attack on the "irresponsibles." And what are we to make of Brooks' side remark in his speech that Edmund Wilson, of all people, "partially agrees with me"? Or of Thomas Mann's extraordinary comment on the paper, which I think worth reproducing in full:

> It strikes me as a piece of daring, intelligent and aggressive criticism; I have been well entertained by it without considering myself justified to give it a Yes or No. Above all I must admit that I am not sufficiently familiar with Eliot's work to be able to judge whether the extraordinary hostility which Van Wyck Brooks feels for this author is justified or not. I am tolerant by nature and look at things with an eye to gain from them the best for my own education; I would never have the courage to express such contempt for Joyce, Valéry, etc., as the author does.
>
> In the main, he is undoubtedly right when he says that in our present epoch only a few primary and truly great poets and authors represent and embody the spirit and the experience of our time. The others do work which probably also has to be done, but is not creative in the true sense, and they are certainly not entitled to lack respect for the great representatives of tradition. I believe, however, that this difference between the real leaders of a culture and its average servants and carriers has existed at all times, and is no particular sign of our epoch.

It is clear that Mann is somewhat uneasy about Brooks' paper; his comment is the most shameful kind of equivocation. He is "not familiar" with Eliot's work—what amazing ignorance in one who aspires to be the 20th century Goethe! He is "tolerant" of Joyce, Valéry, "etc."—what impudent condescension! The second

*For this list I have also drawn on a speech Brooks gave a year ago at Hunter College (published as "On Literature Today") in which he first developed his thesis, though in much more genial and cautious terms.

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paragraph of his letter is pure doubletalk: of course there are only "a few primary and truly great" creators in every age, but the question is precisely does Mann agree with Brooks' definition of who these are today? The implication, which he lacks courage to state openly, is that he does. But Mann read Brooks hastily when he speaks of "a few" great creators. Brooks mentions *only one* of our age, and that one happens to be none other than . . . Thomas Mann. So we see Mann accepting the flattery and assenting to Brooks' barbaric attack on all the other great writers of our age.

The most obvious comment on the two lists of writers given above is also the most important: all the primary writers except Mann* are of the past, while the scope of the "coterie" classification includes practically every significant modern writer, of every school from Paul Valéry to James T. Farrell. Now it would be logically *possible* that many writers in the past and no writers today might measure up to a given esthetic standard. But Brooks is not making an esthetic judgment—in fact one of his chief quarrels with the coterie writers is their preoccupation with "mere" esthetics. He is making a *historical* judgment: he claims that Eliot, Joyce and the rest are bad writers because they don't truly render the "sense of the age." This is the point at issue. For, if we overlook the crudity of Brooks' formulations, we can agree with him that the coterie writers don't believe in progress and the "march of humanity," that they are inclined to be sceptical and critical, that they are not at all popular, and that they represent the end and not the beginning of a culture. But the real questions are: Is their scepticism justified? Are their audiences small because popular cultural values are debased or because they perversely prefer to isolate themselves from "humanity"? *Is* bourgeois society—which I assume Brooks would grant is the society of the period and writers in question—dying, or is it entering on a new life?

For all his boldness, Brooks nowhere dares to assert that bourgeois society in this century is in a flourishing condition. He simply *assumes* this crucial point—or, more accurately, doesn't seem

*This exception is in appearance only. Brooks dubs Mann "primary" not because of his *work*, which is patently "secondary" in its pessimism, scepticism and world-weariness, but because of his *ego*, because "the Goethe-intoxicated Mann" alone of modern writers is preoccupied with "the idea of greatness." What irony, that the foible of a great creative talent, which leads him to pose as *Goethe redivivus*, should be to Brooks precisely Mann's passport to the ranks of the "primary" writers!

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aware it *is* crucial, and that writers can be expected to exhibit his "primary" virtues only in a "primary" historical period. Here his historical illiteracy stands him in good stead. For he is actually able to believe that the specific values of the last century are eternal values, and that Homer, Rabelais, Erasmus, Milton and Dostoievsky all wore the spiritual costume of Victorian humanitarianism. "Tradition," he states flatly, "implies that mankind is marching forward." And: "This mood of health, will, courage, faith in human nature is the dominant mood in the history of literature."

"Thirty years ago, when I began to write," remarked Brooks wistfully in his Hunter College speech, "the future was an exciting and hopeful vista. Everyone believed in evolution as a natural social process. We took the end for granted. Mankind was marching forward." Facing a world in which such beliefs are violently in conflict with reality, and unable or unwilling to change them, Brooks is forced to denounce as somehow responsible for this reality those writers whose work most truthfully reflects it. It is a particularly neat example of how an originally progressive ideology becomes reactionary when it is carried over into a later period. Van Wyck Brooks has become, doubtless with the best intentions, our leading mouthpiece for totalitarian cultural values. For the spirit in which such great creative works as *Ulysses, The Golden Bowl, Death in Venice, Swann's Way* and *The Wasteland* are conceived is that of free inquiry and criticism, and it must always and in every instance result in exposing the overmastering reality of our age: the decomposition of the bourgeois synthesis in all fields. The final turn of the screw is that Brooks, like MacLeish, in attacking those whose work exposes this decomposition, himself expresses its farthest totalitarian reach. We can now understand his close relations with the Stalinist literary front, his chauvinistic leanings of late years, and his famous proposal that "committees be formed in towns to make house-to-house collections of objects made in Germany, which might be destroyed in public bonfires. . . . If these mass-demonstrations were on a scale sufficiently large, they would suggest that democracy has something to say." (Letter to *Time*, Dec. 5, 1938) Hitler also has something to say, in these terms, and has said it.

To explain how it is that the greatest writers of the age don't possess the "sense of the age," Brooks constructs the theory that a

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clique of mediocrities have somehow seized control of modern literature and imposed on it a set of "secondary" values which effectively prevents any one (except Van Wyck Brooks) from perceiving that they themselves are just not up to the "primary" standard. "That certain minds are dominant does not mean that these are the minds which possess the sense of the age. They may be only the most articulate. . . . These coterie writers have expressed a moment in which they have caught humanity napping." It is all a tragic historical *accident*—like an automobile smashup. In an incredibly venomous and silly passage he calls James and Eliot "little Jack Horners" who sit in a corner and gloat over their little plums of style. "Meantime they forget that they are in a corner, while the center of the room is occupied by some one else. But the some one in the center sits in the place of humanity, and he has the final word." The object of the grand conspiracy—he actually refers to "James Joyce, who conspired with Eliot to destroy tradition"—is to "cut away the standard by which they can be measured as the minor poets and novelists they most assuredly are." Elsewhere he refers to "international mystagogues"—this note of xenophobia recurs throughout the paper—"concerned, above everything else, for their own prestige; for, as maladjusted persons they are insecure, and, being insecure, they develop a morbid will-to-power." This is an eminent literary critic writing in the year 1941!*

At one point in his tirade, Brooks recalls, a bit uneasily one suspects, that his subject matter is after all literature. "But are not some of them beautiful writers? Who can deny this? I enjoy their artistry as much as any man living." But what shall we say of the sensibility of a literary critic who reacts to the playful and wonderfully skillful parody section in *Ulysses* in these terms:

> Has he not in the "Oxen of the Sun" episode run through the whole of English literature, depreciating with his parodies its greatest authors, deforming every one of them—Gibbon, Burke, Goldsmith, Lamb, De Quincy, Dickens, Ruskin, Burns and a

*In the same Chamber-of-Commerce spirit, Brooks asks: "What was Proust's sickness if not an excuse for dropping out of the common life, to which he was not superior but unequal?" Cf. Eastman's *Readers Digest* article on Marx: "While telling a planet how its future business was to be run, he threw up his hands at the comparatively simple task of earning his own living. He had to be supported throughout life like a baby, and as though to compensate he grew an enormous beard." Such judgments tell us nothing pertinent about Proust or Marx, but much about their critics and even more about the state of our culture today.

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> dozen others? What fools he makes them seem as he fills his travesties of their styles with trivial and salacious implications! —and all for the glorification of James Joyce. For what a big boy he must be to put all these authors in their places!

Here we have the accusation of petty vanity—so often repeated as to appear to be an obsession—and the insensibility to specifically *literary* values already noted, combined with a Victorian squeamishness ("salacious implications") and a feeling that any adverse criticism of the great writers of the past is *irreverent* and a blow at "tradition." Brooks is shocked by Joyce's paraphrase of Newman's hymn, "Lead, kindly foul!" and his: "Greater love than this no man hath than that a man lay down his wife for a friend. Go thou and do likewise." He is shocked by the freedom with which Pound and Eliot comment on established authors. When, after the lecture, some one asked him whether Wagner and Dostoievsky were "primary," Brooks replied in all solemnity, according to the *N. Y. Times*, "that although Wagner had streaks of meanness in his character and Dostoievsky was morbid, their other qualities entitled them to be termed great men." Shades of Edmund Clarence Stedman!*

Everything is reversed in the looking-glass land Brooks mentally inhabits. He objects that Eliot and Joyce are destroying "tradition," but he himself would kill the living tradition of our age for the sake of a sapless respectability. He scolds the coterie writers for their "negativism" and "death-drive" but what could be more Nihilistic than his own rejection of the whole body of significant writing of our time? This apostle of the positive, the "life-drive," recommends to the contemporary American writer that he nourish his art on . . . Whittier. No, the shoe is decidedly on the other foot. It is true that the approach of the coterie writers to the specific historical values of modern society is negativistic, cynical, sceptical, destructive, etc. But in an age of social decay, it is only by rejecting the *specific* and *immediate* values of society that the writer can preserve those *general* and *eternal* human values

*The Brooks of 1941, in fact, has joined hands with that vestal guardian of the bourgeois *convenances* he so acidly depicted in his *Ordeal of Mark Twain:* Olivia Clemens, who made her husband delete from his manuscripts such words as "stench," "offal" and "breech-clout." Brooks quotes one of her marginal notations: "P. 1038—I hate to have your father pictured as lashing a slave boy." "It's out, my father is whitewashed," noted Twain. He also took out the offending words, protesting, "You are steadily weakening the English tongue, Livy." Isn't all this just the operation Brooks would perform on modern writing?

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with which Brooks is concerned. What blindness to see in *Ulysses*, a work overflowing with genial delight in the richness of human life, a *rejection* of life. What is rejected is a specific historical social order, and it is only by making that rejection that Joyce was able to survive as an artist and to preserve and defend those general human values on which culture depends. Brooks does not mention a single contemporary "primary" writer, because to do so would have given the whole show away. For there *are* such writers today, plenty of them. They put into practice what Brooks preaches, they accept modern society, they are positive, constructive, optimistic, popular, and they are firm believers in progress. Their work, however, turns out to be worthless as literature and also profoundly anti-human. It is printed in, among other periodicals, *The Saturday Evening Post.**

Where have we heard all this before? Where have we seen these false dichotomies: "form" vs. "content", "pessimism" vs. "optimism", "intellect" vs. "life", "destructive" vs. "constructive", "esthete" vs. "humanity"? Where have we known this confusion of social and literary values, this terrible *hatred* of all that is most living in modern culture? Where have we observed these methods of smearing an opponent, these amalgams of disparate tendencies, this reduction of men's motives to vanity and pure love of evil? Not in the spirit of abuse but as a sober historical description, I say these are the specific cultural values of Stalinism and the specific methods of the Moscow Trials. Brooks' speech could have been delivered, and was in essence delivered many times, at Stalinist literary meetings here and in Russia during the crusade against "formalism" and for "social realism" which began with the Popular Front turn in 1936 and remains the characteristic Stalinist approach to esthetics. Proust to him is a "spoiled child,"

*In *Letters and Leadership* (1918), Brooks quotes these words of a popular writer of the day: "'Modern life is full of problems, complex and difficult. . . . The newspaper poets are forever preaching the sanest optimism. . . . That's the kind of poetry the people want, and the fact that they want it shows that their hearts and heads are all right.'" Brooks commented: "This doctrine is that the function of art is to turn aside the problems of life from the current of emotional experiences and create in its audience a condition of cheerfulness that is not organically drived from the experience but added from the outside." Brooks' evolution might be summed up thus: up to 1920 he urged American writers to be more critical of bourgeois society; in the twenties they followed his advice, found society rotten, said so; today, although (or perhaps because) society is incomparably more rotted, Brooks wants the verdict reversed.

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Joyce "the ash-end of a burnt-out cigar," just as Radek could describe *Ulysses* as "a microscope focussed on a dunghill." And aren't we right at home in that poisonous atmosphere again when we read that John Crowe Ransom's literary criticism "suggests the joy of Bruno Mussolini hunting out the Ethiopians"? Or when Brooks retorts to Mann's "toleration" of T. S. Eliot: "Dr. Mann is not tolerant of Hitler, and there are certain people about whom I am not tolerant."? Is it far-fetched to bring in the Moscow Trials? Their stage-managers, like Brooks confronted with unanswerable historical objections to their frame-up, also had to seek motivations for the accused in personal vanity and sheer diabolism. And just as they found it convenient to amalgamate fascists, Bukharinists, Trotskyists, and bourgeoisie into a single block, so Brooks makes no distinction between the critical values of Eliot, Richards, Tate, Pound and—actually—Logan Pearsall Smith. We are only just beginning to appreciate the terrible significance of the Trials for our age. The more closely integrated Stalin's Russia becomes into the Anglo-American war effort, the more threatening will be a recrudescence of its cultural values. We may have to fight the old fights of the thirties all over again. On the basis of this paper, Brooks is the logical successor to Dashiell Hammett as president of the League of American Writers.

But this outburst by an eminent American critic suggests even more than this. Here we have that *official* approach to culture which has spread far beyond the confines of the Stalinist movement. Brooks' thesis is essentially an amplification of the attack on the "irresponsibles" made a year ago by Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress and intimate of the White House. And would not Goebbels, the foe of "degenerate" modern art, applaud not only the particular cultural tendency attacked but also the very terms of the argument: "Primary literature somehow follows the biological grain; it favors what psychologists call the 'life-drive'; it is a force of regeneration that in some way conduces to race survival." "Kulturbolschewismus", "formalism", "coterie writing", "irresponsibles"—the terms differ for strategic reasons, but the content—and The Enemy—is the same.

The official approach to art has for its aim the protection of a historically reactionary form of society against the free inquiry and criticism of the intelligentsia. It is an attempt to impose on

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the writer *from outside* certain socio-political values, and to provide a rationalization for damning his work *esthetically* if it fails to conform to these *social values*. The mechanism is exposed with particular crudeness in Brooks' paper, which simultaneously damns coterie writing in social terms because it has a *bad* content ("pessimistic", "negativistic", etc.) and also damns it esthetically because it has *no* content ("mere artificers of words . . . for whom only the manner exists and not the substance"). We may also note that the official critic, since he is attempting to defend what is historically indefensible, is forced at every turn to attribute petty and base motives to the serious writers of his day, and to elevate pure theological *wickedness* into a historical principle.

The recent growth of this tendency over here is an ominous sign of the drift towards totalitarianism. It is a matter of cultural life and death to resist this tendency, regardless of one's specific political beliefs. Looking over back issues of this magazine, I am struck with how continuously we have been fighting a rear-guard action against this growing official esthetic, first as it manifested itself in the Stalinist writers' front, then, after the Nazi Pact disillusioned the main body of American writers with Stalinism (unfortunately, purely on the political level, without raising the broader cultural issues at all), as it has cropped up in the swing behind the government in the war crisis. The irony is, of course, that it *is* a rear-guard action, that the new social and political forces which alone can bring into being a new esthetic tendency are still frozen and impotent. Eliot, Joyce, Proust, James, Valéry—these represent, as Brooks says, an end and not a beginning. Their school had done its work, fought and won its battles by the end of the twenties. But it is still the most advanced cultural tendency that exists, and in a reactionary period it has come to represent again relatively the same threat to official society as it did in the early decades of the century. The old battles must be fought again, the old lessons learned once more.

" *'Well, in* our *country,' said Alice, still panting a little, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing.' 'A slow sort of country!' said the Red Queen. 'Now* here, *you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place.'* "

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The Good Samaritan

J. Mayhall

WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED in Gutterville to take up my newly acquired position as librarian there, I found, after a careful check-up that I had just one dress to my name, accompanied by a pair of dilapidated skirts.

The dress was a mushy looking purple wool and had seen its best days. The skirts were slightly better off. They had been donated to me by a distant cousin who had sent them one Christmas Eve marked "Collect." At first, feeling a little piqued, I had the inclination to throw them away, but then moved by some prophetic calculation and foreseeing a more rainy day than it was at the time I put the skirts carefully away in an old suitcase and forgot about them.

And I did not remember them again until the Gutterville job turned up with only the mushy wool dress in which to make myself acceptable in the eyes of the Gutterville Library inmates. So I decided that I would try to patch up the old skirts and wear them.

But alas, the task was too much for me and after much ripping and tearing of hems and plackets I came to the decision that a dressmaker would be the more economical way of dealing with the situation.

Upon which I began to inquire about town for names of dressmakers.

Gutterville is a small and lovely New England town situated somewhere inland. It is a place made up of zig-zag streets, a single highway and a series of well-kept lawns. The inhabitants I had seen only at a distance. They were usual looking energetic people and generally quite cheerful during library hours. From several of them I learned the name of the dressmaker, for there was only one.

I was told that she was a Miss Hotch and that she lived on the edge of town and was a dear lovely lady. This comment was delivered by a dear lovely lady also, so I hastened to believe it.

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The day on which I chose to visit Miss Hotch was one of sunny warmth. Bright immeasurable light came from everywhere in the sky. It was like the beginning of Spring.

As I walked into Miss Hotch's front yard, which was girded on all sides by a small white fence, a quick breath of frail warm air tugged at my ankles and I did all but swoon in the pleasant and comfortable sight of a little white and green house which stood in front of me. A fluttery red chicken galloped across my path, giving a happy cluck as it went.

As I had been bumping about the world a bit (impoverished, the novelists call it) I experienced a feeling of relief upon viewing this house, the yard and the chicken. Such things have immortal effect on one's character—under the proper circumstances. It was thus then.

Even as I stepped into the yard I seemed to view the world from a different point of view, to take courage, to forget the woes of War, Hate, Fame and what have you—all those things which are continually getting in one's way, particularly if one has been spiritually, emotionally or economically unfortunate.

The doorbell was the old-fashioned kind, a round brass knob on which one pulled gently and was instantly rewarded by a solemn tinkle somewhere in the back of the house. As I waited, I noticed six gaudy red geraniums sitting in the narrow porch-box beside me. They looked well-nourished and happy waving in the Spring breeze. Their bitter tantalizing odor pervaded the whole atmosphere. I stood joyfully clutching my two moth-eaten skirts under my arm.

At that moment the door was opened. There stood a little old lady with silvery white hair.

"Yes?" she said in a silvery white voice.

"I have," I said briskly, "some skirts here that I thought you might be interested in altering. That is—if you are Miss Hotch."

"I *am* Miss Hotch, my dear," she beckoned gently, "Come in."

And I followed. . .

Inside, the rooms were filled with soft comfortable furniture. A large and amber cat sniffed lazily at me and softly slid down behind a footstool. A clock with gold-lettered numbers sat in the far corner of the room. The wall-paper was spattered with faded pink flowers which hung about the walls in fanciful braids. In

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the center of the living-room stood a wide old fire-black graced on each side by shining brass andirons.

Miss Hotch and I walked toward a small neat sewing machine which was surrounded by small neat packages of odd material. She smiled inscrutably at me and took out a round yellow ball of tape measure and fingered it idly. Her pale silver hair gleamed in the sunlight.

"You live here alone?" I asked.

"Um," she answered.

Not to look ill at ease I flung myself quietly into a chintz-colored chair. The springs vibrated gently and subsided into a quiet monotone.

"Oh," I said cheerfully, "it was the chair."

Miss Hotch gave me a look of quick suspicion.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"Why do I ask—what?" I said.

"Why do you ask if I live here alone?"

As I hadn't the slightest idea as to why I had asked I made a slight mumbling gesture of the mouth which could have been, "Oh, I don't know," or, "oh, nothing," or something equally as ambiguous.

"You're a stranger in town, aren't you?" the old lady surveyed me keenly.

"Why—uh, yes—rather," I said guiltily. Then added hastily, "But not for long. No indeedy, not for long."

She unrolled the tape measure and let the end of it fall to her feet. The round amber cat leaped up from behind the footstool and began to claw happily at the black stitched numbers. The old lady paid little attention. She was smiling at me.

"Oh, then you intend to *become one of us?*" her question was sweet and silvery.

With a feeling of deep gratitude I smiled back, "Oh yes, undoubtedly yes indeedy." My voice was healthy and hearty. I could feel my diaphragm expand with sudden pleasure.

"Well then, my dear," she said, "let's try on the little skirts and see what we can do with them—and for you."

I tried them on. They were much too long and hung like wall-drapes over my primitive carcass.

"Tsk," said Miss Hotch, her mouth full of tiny pins.

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She was quite agile at it, leaping about, now here, now there, once a tuck, twice a tuck. Her hands moved with professional precision. The room was very quiet.

I cleared my throat. "How do you do it?" I said.

"I learned," she said.

"You must have been here a long time," I said.

"One hundred per-cent American," she said.

"Same house?" I asked.

"Same town," she answered. "Family born and raised right in this house."

"Nice," I murmured.

"Cousins married to keep the family name," she added. "That's how we feel about it."

"Yes, I'm sure," I said modestly, then asked, feeling shy, "Any connection with the Mayflower?"

She thought for a long time. "I suppose so," she said finally.

Then she looked me straight in the eye.

"Are you a citizen?" she asked.

My heart sank within me. I presumed that I was but I couldn't remember anyone's telling me outright that I was. But of course I must be. Miss Hotch and the cat glared sternly at me.

"Oh yes, yes indeedy," I said.

She surveyed me from head to toe. "Are you sure?" she said, her eyes swooping upon me like two fat brown sparrows.

With expert swiftness I retraced the tiny foot-steps of my life. Tricycles, trains, trees, hard luck—all flew by my mind's eye. With a kind of vigorous accusation my thoughts touched each event, but all proceeded with normal innocence. No murders, no policemen, sicknesses all known, understood, death certificates signed.

"Oh yes," I took a deep breath, "I'm a citizen." My tone achieved a small victory over the room.

Gracious like sunlight her smile burst forth again. The big cat fumbled at the rug and fell asleep.

Miss Hotch stooped down and picked up a red wool tomato cushion which was full of small splinters of light. They were pins.

"How pretty!" I exclaimed.

She held it between thumb and fore-finger and looked at me, "It was my grandmother's," she said, "one hundred per-cent American."

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"Oh thank you," I said. "That is—I mean—how nice."

"Not at all," she answered and took out three pins, depositing them among the dingy folds of the altering skirts.

Then Miss Hotch did a very surprising thing. She looked carefully about the room, went to the window and examined the landscape, returned and whispered gently to me in her gentle voice, "The reason I asked if you were a stranger in town is—" she paused and cautiously searched the room with her brown eyes. There was no one there. "—is" she continued, "that I don't trust strangers."

"No? Why?" I asked before I realized.

"Why! Why indeed!" her eyes leaped flame, "Because you don't know who a stranger *is*, that's why!" She smiled triumphantly. "Me, I believe in freedom of speech."

"Why, so do I," I said. "But then—" I pondered, "But then, everybody's a stranger at first!" I exclaimed brightly.

Her eyes burned into me.

"That is," I continued feeling shy again, "most people are. That is, some people are—."

Was I a stranger? I thought. I scanned my life's history. It lengthened behind me like a winding road. The familiar past receded in the distance, just beyond the last curve of consciousness. And like a sudden flight into some strange land I was standing here in this room. Yes, I was certainly a stranger.

Miss Hotch stood safely on her two feet and looked at me. "I had a boarder here last month," she said.

"Oh?" I asked.

"Just last month," she nodded emphatically, pushing me around to look at the skirt.

"Anybody I know?" I asked rather aimlessly.

"I should hope not," she said. "*He* was a stranger."

"Oh."

"He looked—" her voice sank meaningfully, "—foreign!"

"Oh," my mouth flew open in horror.

"Yes, that's what I said," she nodded to me with an approving smile which I accepted gratefully.

"Well, was he?" I asked. "*Foreign*, I mean."

"I never found out," she said crisply, "that is, it was never

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proven. But I don't need proof. I got my eyes!" she pointed to them. "And my ears!" she pointed to them too.

"Did he speak with an accent—?" I ventured, feeling a tantalizing curiosity creep over me, soft, looming like the smell of geraniums just outside the window.

"No indeedy," she drew her mouth down tightly, "of course not." She shook the little red pin cushion at me. "You can't tell about their accents. They hide them. They're clever."

She went to the window, peeped gently out and came back again.

"We had better watch out," she said softly; then suddenly full of enormous energy she shouted full into my ear, "We'd—better—watch—*out!*"

At the sound of her voice the cat gave a startled meow and leaped out from behind the footstool and disappeared straight into the fireplace. When it came out its long fluffy hair was dripping with soot.

"Oh," said Miss Hotch, "Tommy, you march right out in the kitchen and stay until the lady leaves. Now why did he do that, do you think?"

"Nice cat," I said.

"Oh yes," she answered.

"Persian?" I asked.

"One hundred per-cent," she said.

"What about the—you know what?" I said, unresisting, "Did he confess his birth?"

"He didn't have to. I could tell by the look in his eye."

"Oh, can you tell that way?" I asked. I tried to remember if I could tell that way. All of the faces I had known passed in single formation before me. Deeply I observed their unfriendly eyes. They moved forward, over me, passing on. I tried to stop them. Something was moving behind their eyes. I couldn't imagine what it was. Miss Hotch would know. I looked at her with new respect.

"Well," I said.

"You had a funny look just then," she said.

I started to tell her what I had been thinking but she interrupted me. "Are you a Fifth Columnist?" she said.

"Oh no, no indeedy," I said. "Perish the thought."

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She smiled again. "Well, we can't be too careful," she said. "Now, let's try on the other one."

I did.

The sun came in the window through the soft white curtains and shone on the old rose-colored carpet. From somewhere in the house a canary sang.

"Do you know what happened to my boarder?" she said, carefully snipping with a little pair of scissors.

"No," I said watching the attractive swirl of skirt beginning to take shape. Well-fitting clothes give one the sensation of walking skyward. Clothes should not shadow the self like a roof. They should dwell beneath consciousness, fit into the skin. Already with the sharp cut of the skirt I felt a new sense of freedom and self-respect. I looked fondly at Miss Hotch. "What happened to him?" I asked.

"He was arrested," she said, "on suspicion."

"Oh, I said, then glibly, "Suspicion? Whose?"

"Mine," she whispered. "We can't be too careful."

"Did you—uh—have any proof?" I asked.

"Oh, I didn't need it. I could tell—"

"By the look in his eye?" I suggested.

"Certainly," she said, "if he's guilty it will be proven. If he is innocent then they just haven't looked hard enough for proof of his guilt. I *know*."

She stood there eyes alight beneath the silver brow, full of gleaming experience that dazzled with every gesture. My own experience lay unharvested, barren. I could count on my fingers the numbers of automobile accidents I had seen, the suicides, I had even escaped the last War. All I had ever been was tired, hungry. And what a drab thing that was.

I stepped out of the skirt dejected but Miss Hotch, seeming to sense my mood, patted me on the shoulder comfortingly, "There now; it's all done."

She folded the skirts neatly. "They will be ready by Monday."

"Oh thank you," I said.

The cat stuck its sooty head at the doorway and regarded us quietly. A sudden and immense peace seemed to come over the room. The sun had moved a little and the landscape of the wallpaper was turning to a dark beautiful blood-red.

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Almost impulsively I gave a short sigh of regret at the thought of leaving.

"You have a lovely home," I said.

"Yes," she said, "and I intend to preserve it."

Feeling bold I put my hand forward toward hers, "You've been awfully nice," I said.

She smiled gently, "I hope you will become one of my regular customers," she shook hands with me.

"Oh," I said inhaling deeply, "I would certainly love to."

"Oh my dear," she said as I started out.

"Yes?" I said, hoping to please her.

"My dear," she said, "You aren't—Jewish—are you?"

"Oh no!" I said.

She shook hands again, "You rather had—"

"That *look?*" I asked.

"Why yes—but seeing that you're not, I'd rather like to know you better. You must come for tea someday."

I nodded vigorously, smiled and departed.

Outside it was just sunset and the little front yard was full of pretty red and brown chickens. They clucked happily at me as I went past. But some of them hovered in the corner of the fence, protecting their tail-feathers from the sharp evening wind which had arisen.

Theodore Roethke

CITY LIMITS

Frayed rugs, rags, grease, harsh cinders everywhere;
A trackhand's face cracks like a rusty sieve;
The soot of evil sifts through falling air
Streaking a baby's bib, a drunkard's sleeve,—
These are the images by which I live.

Unclean! Unclean! That carrion crow, the eye,
Flaps through a haze of hate in vicious weathers,
A starving portent in a grimy sky.
Metallic rubbish that no bird beak gathers
Resists the pungent death of flesh or feathers.

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Genesis of "Swann"

Robert Vigneron

WITH JANUARY 1907 begins a new phase in the life of Marcel Proust. He has just given up his *rue de Courcelles* apartment, haunted with memories of his father and mother, to move into a new apartment at 102 *boulevard Haussmann*, where he will camp for twelve years. He is sick: ever since his childhood, spells of asthma have frequently compelled him to take to his bed for weeks and months at a time; and, shortly after his mother's death, he has been a patient in a clinic for nervous disorders. He is tormented: ever since the sordid aberrations of his adolescent years, he has maintained a morbid interest in the mysteries of Sodom and Gomorrah. He is sterile: he aspires to express himself in an original piece of creative work; but so far his wretched existence has prevented him from fulfilling this desire, which his articles in the *Figaro* and his translations from Ruskin have failed to satisfy. The times, however, are near.

He had scarcely settled in his new quarters when, around the first days of August 1907, his doctors compelled him to leave Paris, and he went to Cabourg, a sea-side resort on the Channel, where he put up at the *Grand Hôtel*. This interlude was to be of tremendous import for his private life. Still deeply imbued with Ruskinian ideas, he intended to take advantage of his stay in Cabourg to explore Normandy as an aesthete and archaeologist. Upon his arrival, he therefore wrote to Emile Mâle for learned advice on the significant monuments in this province, and he began to look for a closed motor-car, which would make it possible for him to drive over the whole countryside without exposing himself either to the air or to the sun, his worst enemies. Thus he discovered

[1]This paper is based on the author's own chronological classification of the correspondence of Marcel Proust. It was presented in French on April 15, 1936, before the *Philological Society* and on July 13, 1936, before the *Romance Club* of the University of Chicago. A more detailed version, including the supporting evidence, has been published in French in the *Revue d'histoire de la philosophie*, January 15, 1937, pp. 67-115. According to the usage established by Proust himself, by *Swann* we mean the whole *A la recherche du temps perdu*.

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Agostinelli. Born in Monaco of a *monégasque* father and a *niçoise* mother, Alfred Agostinelli was then nineteen years old, a beardless youth with languorous Southern eyes, and drove one of the red *Unic* taxicabs of the *Compagnie des taximètres de Monaco.* Proust hired him for the season, and Agostinelli not only managed to pilot him without incident to Caen, Bayeux, Dives, Pont-Audemer, Lisieux, but, around the middle of September, brought him safely back to Paris. No sooner had Proust returned to his *boulevard Haussmann* apartment than recurring asthmatic spells forced him to take to his bed. Yet he did not forget the charming ephebe from Cabourg. In spite of his illness, he already had hired him for a few outings when Agostinelli was unexpectedly recalled to Monaco; and, on November 19, he published in the *Figaro* his curious "Impressions de route en automobile," in which he evoked with special relish, à propos of his Ruskinian pilgrimages through Normandy, the interesting personality of his chauffeur. He told how, one night, the ingenious Agostinelli had illuminated the front of Notre-Dame de Lisieux for him with the headlights of the car. He also described the graceful and ambiguous silhouette of the beardless driver leaning on his wheel, as seen from the tonneau; and he allowed his imagination to play with sacrilegious metaphors: he compared him to a nun of speed, to a Saint Cecilia, or again to one of those saints on the portals of the cathedrals, who hold either an anchor, or a wheel, or a harp, or a grill,—the symbols of their art or the instruments of their torture. The young saint in question, surprised but pleased to see himself so prematurely canonized, expressed his gratitude in an enthusiastic letter.

Another series of events, which developed in the fall of 1907, was destined to exert a determinant influence on Proust's literary life: the Eulenburg affair. On October 23, 1907, in Berlin, began the trial of Count von Moltke's libel suit against Maximilian Harden who, in his *Zukunft,* had accused him, as well as Prince Philippe zu Eulenburg and the *camarilla* around the Kaiser, of abnormal inclinations. Proust could not fail to be deeply interested in a scandal disclosing the ramifications and power of a sect whose arcana he was so zealously endeavouring to penetrate, and he followed the proceedings with well informed competence. Harden was acquitted; but almost immediately a new scandal broke out

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when, on November 6, the Moabit court in Berlin opened the trial of another journalist, Adolf Brandt, who had accused Prince Bernhard von Bülow, Chancellor of the Reich, of unnatural vices. On December 19, Harden was again brought to trial before a Berlin court; Prince zu Eulenburg, summoned as a witness, solemnly swore to his own innocence, and Harden was condemned. A few weeks later, on January 22, 1908, two high-ranking officers appeared before the court-martial of the First Division of the Guard to answer charges of homosexual practices.

Meanwhile, all these scandals were being exploited in countless publications. A few commentators limited themselves to philosophical considerations; but most indulged in sensational revelations on the "Sodome de la Sprée." Perhaps Proust, even then, conceived the idea of devoting an objective study to a problem which had haunted him for so long and which contemporary events showed to be of such unexpected import. But another object diverted his attention, at least for a time. In December 1907, MM. Reboux and Muller had published their *A la manière de . . .*, a collection of clever pastiches which met with considerable success; and, in January 1908, was exposed an unbelievable swindle, the "affaire des diamants" or "affaire Lemoine," the vicissitudes of which were going to be news for several months. The former gave Proust the idea, and the latter the subject, of a series of pastiches which he published in February and March 1908 in the *Figaro* under the title: "L'affaire Lemoine."

But he soon tired of this pastime, which he considered rather silly. Furthermore, the German scandals once more were engrossing the attention of Europe. On April 21, 1908, there opened in Munich the trial of Maximilian Harden's suit against Anton Staedele, a journalist who had accused him of allowing himself to be bribed by Prince zu Eulenburg. Irrefutable evidence proved that, when swearing to his innocence at the December trial in Berlin, Prince zu Eulenberg had committed perjury; and the public prosecutor could not ignore this fact. On May 1st, the Prince was questioned at his Liebenberg castle; on May 7, he was put under arrest; on May 8, he was transferred to Berlin and interned in the Charity Hospital. Thus fell His Serene Highness Philippe, Fürst zu Eulenburg und Hertefeld, Graf von Sandels, former ambassador in Vienna, knight of the Black Eagle, lately the friend and

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confidant of the Kaiser, and after him the most powerful man in the German Empire.

It is at this juncture that, struck with this great and terrible example, Marcel Proust resolved to undertake, for publication as a magazine article, a metaphysical and social study of homosexuality, of which he apparently even wrote a few pages. But he soon changed his mind, and projected a short story, instead of an essay, on this same theme. He was hesitating, however, for he already had made the transcendance of art the essential dogma of his aesthetics, and he was afraid he would fail, in a short story on Sodom and Gomorrah, to detach himself completely from the contingencies which had inspired it. He also undoubtedly perceived that a mere short story would be too narrow a frame for such a far-reaching subject: a novel was in order, and this might be his opportunity to realize at last a dream he had indolently been playing with for several years. As early as 1906, immediately after publishing his translation of *Sesame and the Lilies*, he had confessed to his friends how weary he was of the vain task of translation and commentary, and how eager to undertake, as soon as his health would permit, an original and significant piece of work. His pastiches had for a while deluded this creative impulse, without appeasing it. All these characters in search of an author, who had been haunting him—had the Eulenburg affair at last suggested an adequate framework for them? In this homosexual theme, whose importance the German trials had exposed, had he not perchance discovered this "subject of an infinite philosophical significance" he had vainly endeavoured to invent?

The fact is that about July 1908—shortly after the trial of Prince zu Eulenburg had opened on June 27 before the Berlin assizes; and shortly after Count Robert de Montesquiou had consecrated, also on June 27, his *Chancelier de fleurs* to the memory of his beloved Gabriel de Yturri[2]—Marcel Proust apparently was drafting the first pages of a novel which was later to become *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Quest of Time Lost*).[3] Unfortu-

[2]Count Robert de Montesquiou-Fézensac, dilettante, poet, critic, aristocrat extraordinary, is best known in this country as the probable prototype of Huysmans' Des Esseintes and Proust's M. de Charlus. He had helped to introduce Proust to the inner circles of the Faubourg Saint-Germain society. Gabriel de Yturri, for twenty years Montesquiou's secretary and confidant, died on July 6, 1905. The *Chancelier de fleurs* was privately printed.

[3]Scott Moncrieff's translation of this title (*Remembrance of things past*) fails to render the real meaning of the French. Proust himself considered it unsatisfactory and fit at best for a novel by Henri Bordeaux!

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nately, early in August, he had to give up this undertaking and leave Paris for a second sojourn in Cabourg. There he discovered that his strength had appreciably decreased in the course of one year. In the summer of 1907, he had been able to live a relatively active life, drive all over the countryside with Agostinelli, and explore most of Normandy. Now, while he still could venture out on the beach, motoring had become impossible. Toward the end of September, he left Cabourg and drove to Versailles, where he put up at the *Hôtel des Réservoirs*. There he immediately suffered such terrific attacks that he had to remain in seclusion in his apartment for several weeks, with scarcely any other company than his valet and Agostinelli, with whom he played dominoes. But in spite of his miseries, so eager was he to express himself through a work of art before a death he believed imminent, that he made a supreme effort to resume his writing and twice, in his "less bad hours," managed to set to work, twenty minutes each time.

These were brave but unavailing attempts: days, weeks, and months went by, and Proust seemed to have forsaken his project. In the first days of November he had returned to his *boulevard Haussmann* apartment; but about the end of 1908 or the beginning of 1909 his condition became such that he could not even try to write a few lines without suffering terrible headaches. In desperation, he then resigned himself to reverting to a genre which the year before he had deemed stupid: he corrected a few left-over pastiches and in March 1909 published in the *Figaro* one more instalment of his "Affaire Lemoine." After which he relapsed into his pathetic inaction; but he had not yet given up all hope.

As a matter of fact, toward the end of the spring of 1909, he suddenly came back to life. On May 23, he inquires of his friend Georges de Lauris whether the Guermantes family is extinct and the name available for use in a novel. This means that the apparently forsaken project has finally materialized. Indeed, Proust had been hoarding for a long time the impressions and the memories which were to constitute the inexhaustible richness of *A la recherche du temps perdu*. But only then did the mysterious element which suddenly started the crystallizing process drop into a mind which had slowly reached the saturation point. Then, by an amazing revelation, he beholds his opus: he discovers its true

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subject-matter: the memories of his own life; he selects its fundamental theme: the history of a literary vocation; he predetermines its original plan, this circular development which, after the narrative of a whole life and the exploration of a whole world, will so accurately dovetail the very last page into the very first one. Then he hastily drafts the initial and the final chapters, the key pieces of the whole structure; later only he will roughly sketch the intermediate chapters. But he is obsessed with the fear of death, he has no time to spare, and he works desperately, in spite of his asthmatic spells, in spite of his sleepless nights and days. Is it not then that, a second Scheherezade, he jotted down on his manuscript these pathetic lines: "Long to write. In the daytime at best could I try to sleep. But I would need many nights, maybe a hundred, maybe a thousand. And I would be obsessed with the anxiety of not knowing whether, in the morning, when I interrupted my tale, the master of my destiny, less benevolent than Sultan Sheriar, would consent to suspend my death sentence and allow me to resume the next evening."[4]

Presently however, in the stifling heat of Paris in August, in the confined atmosphere of his air-tight apartment, he was taken with such a fever that he was compelled to leave post-haste for Cabourg, which he reached in a pitiful condition. It is from Cabourg that, about the end of August 1909, he began to inform his friends of his new undertaking, and hint at the audacity of a subject which might well scandalize some worthy souls. Unfortunately he had very poor accommodations at the *Grand Hôtel*, rooms so damp that he soon was forced to move to new quarters. Moreover, in spite of the ever increasing deterioration of his health, he experienced a strange revival and, without ever venturing outside, began to live a comparatively active life. At the *Casino*, where he appeared around nine o'clock in the evening, he would meet a few people, and preach to a few budding ephebes the poetic gospel according to Mme. de Noailles. But he failed to settle down to work.

This failure apparently impelled him to decide, on his return to Paris in the early fall, to reform his existence altogether. He now understands the vanity of his life, for he has perceived the deep meaning of artistic creation and discovered the transcendent

[4]Our own translation.

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universe which it reveals. He therefore will henceforward put before any artificial worldly obligation the imperious duty to bring out the opus still half buried in the depths of his unconscious mind. So far, his peculiarities and his miseries notwithstanding, he has managed to lead a rather frivolous life: from now on, he will seclude himself rigorously in his *boulevard Haussmann* apartment, in his dark, stuffy, sound-proof room, behind closed shutters and cork-lined walls. He does not go out any more. He does not tolerate visits any more. Around his cell, he weaves the inextricable web of excuses, pretences, and lies. In order to keep off the officious, in order to discourage the faithful, he more than ever pleads the tyrannical complications of an impredictable ailment, he alleges his asthmatic spells, his sleepless hours and his fumigations. Thus, he hopes, he will be able to work. The elements themselves, however, seem to conspire against him. About the end of January 1910, the Seine overflows its banks and invades Paris, street by street, district after district. For several days, the *boulevard Haussmann* remains submerged; then the flood waters begin to recede and the river finally resumes its normal course. But presently the repair-men appear, more formidable than the flood itself, with their picks and saws and hammers. To escape the racket, the unfortunate drugs himself with opium and veronal, which in turn stir up new calamities, for in addition to his other ailments he now has developed albuminuria. His work consequently shows little progress.

In desperation, around the middle of July 1910, Proust once more left for Cabourg. During the two months which he spent there, he again had to remain in seclusion in his room. Not once could he set foot on the beach. He was barely able, every two or three days, to get up and appear in the dining-room for one hour or so; and one day in ten he managed to work. In spite of everything, however, he persevered in his undertaking with an indomitable tenacity.

When he was back in Paris, toward the end of September, he inflexibly resumed his cloistered life. He was now suffering from a heart ailment, and was more than ever compelled to keep to his bed; but sometimes he would get up in the dead of night, in order feverishly to add a few more pages to this work, the completion of which had become an unremitting obsession. In the spring of

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1911, he unexpectedly discovered in Louis de Robert's *Roman du malade* (*The Novel of a Sick Man*) both an example and an incentive. So deeply was he moved that he wrote the author an admirable letter, in which he listed all the miseries which had lately afflicted him, concluding however this doleful account with an act of faith in the transcendance of art and the fecundity of suffering. But claustration and suffering seemed to be of no avail, since the opus to which he was sacrificing everything and even his life was not progressing. One evening, he imprudently broke his rule in order to accompany Robert de Montesquiou to d'Annunzio's *Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, and suffered agonizing spells as a result. But the society people he had met there again after several years inspired him with caustic observations to weave into his novel; and toward the end of the spring he began to foresee the end of his Calvary.

About the middle of August 1911, he again went to Cabourg. There he cloistered himself as usual, unable to step outside even once, more than ever discouraging his friends from visiting him, and gambling at baccarat with unwonted eagerness. Upon his return to Paris in the fall, this gambling fever turned into a fever of speculation. But he knew nothing about the intricacies of margins and settlements and balances; and his naïve manipulations resulted, as could be expected, in heavy losses.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these accidents, the endless work was at last nearing completion. During the summer of 1911, Proust was already planning to publish at least a part of it; and the first draft apparently was completed toward the end of January 1912, when the author was correcting his first chapter in order to have it typewritten. It is at this juncture that Agostinelli visibly reappeared in the life of Proust. It may be assumed that the pleasant familiarity initiated at Cabourg had been discreetly followed up in Paris, and that the youthful chauffeur had been granted privileged admittance into the claustral apartment from which so many now importunate friends had been banned. Anyway, finding himself unemployed, he offered his services. But Proust, unwilling to be unfair to his usual driver, declined to hire Agostinelli as his chauffeur; instead he offered to engage him as his secretary and have him type the manuscript he had just completed. Agostinelli gratefully accepted this unexpected assign-

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ment. He thereafter became an integral part of his employer's life; and Proust soon discovered in him an extraordinary person, gifted with the most remarkable intellectual capacities, and able, in spite of his lack of education, to write sentences of which the greatest authors might have been proud.

By the end of March 1912, Proust figures that his novel will cover from 800 to 900 printed pages. A few weeks later, a new computation reveals an unexpected wealth of material; he then estimates that from 1300 to 1400 hundred pages will be needed, and foresees two volumes of approximately 650 pages each or perhaps 700 and 500 pages respectively. He even considers for a while four volumes of about 300 pages each, corresponding to the four main parts of the novel. Be it as it may: the work conceived in the spring of 1908 first as an essay and then as a short story; undertaken in the summer and resumed in the autumn of the same year as a novel, but soon forsaken; resumed again in the spring of 1909 and pursued ever since with indomitable tenacity, is completed at last, in its first draft, in the winter of 1912. Relentless toil and unshakable faith in his literary mission have made it possible for this perennial invalid to erect in less than three years, in spite of all obstacles, a monumental work of rigorous structure, the materials of which would fill three or four ordinary novels.

Proust then spends several months revising and enriching it with an admirable concern for material and moral truth; and when, in October 1912, on his return from a new sojourn in Cabourg, he finally makes up his mind to have it printed, his novel appears as a compact unit, organized according to an intricate but rigorous plan which provides for two main antithetic parts of approximately equal length. The first part is devoted to *Swann's side* of French society, that is to say to the wealthy and cultured bourgeoisie: of this the author has, besides the original manuscript, two typewritten copies offering the intermediate and the final versions of the text. The second part is devoted to the *Guermantes side* of society, that is to say to the aristocratic and exclusive Faubourg Saint-Germain caste: of this the author has only the first manuscript draft.

Proust, who at first had planned to publish the whole novel as one indivisible unit, now realized that it would be impossible, and became reconciled to the idea of two instalments. But he soon

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found out that it would be no easy task to discover a publisher. He wasted more than three months in devious negotiations with Fasquelle, Gallimard, and Ollendorff; and finally, in February 1913, he begged his friend René Blum to ask Grasset, a young and enterprising editor, to publish his book at the author's expense. The deal was closed in March, and the printing began without delay. As early as the first days of April, Proust received a batch of *placards*[5] and feverishly set to work, correcting, deleting, adding, filling up the margins, pasting on innumerable *béquets*. As a result, the printer was hopelessly confused, and the publisher charged 595 francs extra for the corrections to the first forty-five *placards* (360 pages). At the same time, a new and serious problem was revealed. The 700 pages or so which, in the final typewritten version, constituted the first half of the novel, devoted to Swann's side of society, already were covering 95 *placards* (760 pages), and it became evident that it would be far too much for one volume, as originally planned. At the request of his publisher and on the advice of his friends, Proust reluctantly agreed, after a long struggle, to sacrifice for the present the contents of the last thirty *placards*. So that when the volume was published, on November 12, 1913, under the general title of *A la recherche du temps perdu*[6] and the specific title of *Du côté de chez Swann*,[7] it was only 523 pages long and accounted for one third only, instead of one half, of the novel which the author had first conceived as one and indivisible.

On the reverse of the title page, the publisher announced "for publication in 1914" the two volumes which were to complete the trilogy: *Le côté de Guermantes*[8] and *Le temps retrouvé*.[9] It therefore seemed certain, in November 1913, that *A la recherche du temps perdu* would normally and regularly proceed to its conclusion. In fact, the first three chapters of *Le côté de Guermantes* had been in proof for several months, for they were the temporarily

[5] First proofs consisting of eight pages printed on a single sheet.

[6] *In quest of time lost.*

[7] *Out Swann's way.* Scott Moncrieff's *Swann's way* fails to render clearly both the literal topographic meaning (walks in the direction of Swann's house near Combray) and the symbolic social meaning (Swann's side of French society) of the French title. Proust himself rejected it.

[8] *The Guermantes side.* Again Scott Moncrieff's *The Guermantes way* fails to express properly the symbolic social meaning, as well as the literal topographic meaning, of the French title.

[9] *Time regained.*

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sacrificed ending of the first volume, consisting of approximately 30 *placards* (240 pages). The remainder of the novel, consisting of the last two chapters of *Le côté de Guermantes* and the nine chapters of *Le temps retrouvé*, was drafted in manuscript form. Undoubtedly, the author would have to make many corrections before these two volumes would be ready for publication. But he was eager to see them published, for through them only would *Du côté de chez Swann* assume at last its full meaning. Why then did he wait for more than six months before taking any steps to have *Le côté de Guermantes* printed?

The reason is that for nearly a year he had been living atrocious hours and that he was now reaching the limit of his strength. As a result of the speculations he had been so foolishly carrying on ever since the autumn of 1911, he thought himself on the verge of bankruptcy. And then his health had grown worse, and the toils and worries of the publication of *Du côté de chez Swann* had exhausted him. But more than anything else, cruel sentimental experiences had finished him: the agonies of doubt and the tortures of jealousy. Agostinelli had indeed given him valuable help; but with this paragon of secretaries a whole undesirable clique had set foot in the house: Agostinelli's pretended wife, Anna, a homely, designing, and jealous woman; his sister, who for a long time had been living on the bounty of an old baron; and probably his brother Emile, who was also a chauffeur. An untrustworthy tribe, with vulgar and expensive tastes, and liable to cause trouble. No doubt Proust proved to be a generous master; but he nevertheless suspected all sorts of greeds, intrigues, and treasons in his entourage. As early as the beginning of 1913, in his letters to Mme. de Noailles, Mme. Straus, Louis de Robert, and Lucien Daudet, in spite of the deep secrecy under which he tries to cloak his private life, he hints at his perplexities and his sufferings. Even the prospect of seeing *Du côté de chez Swann* in print brings him no comfort; in November his answers to the friends who write to express their admiration are full of grief and discouragement; and around the first of January 1914 he confesses, in a letter to Mme. Scheikévitch, that for the last few months he has been so unhappy that one could wish him only a torpor, and this, alas, is denied him.

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Another torment soon was added to his misery. Agostinelli, who was fanatically interested in aviation, had taken it into his head to obtain a pilot's license. Proust did his best to dissuade him; but Anna, on the contrary, encouraged him; and the young man, rich with his master's bounty, refused to listen to reason. Perhaps he began with a few flying lessons at the Buc airdrome near Paris; then one day he left for Monaco; and about the end of March or the beginning of April 1914 he registered at the Garbero Brothers Flying School in Antibes, under the name of Marcel Swann. Proust then bitterly regretted having given him so much money and so having deprived himself of a powerful means of persuasion. Out of the darkness of his cloistered apartment, as if from the top of Mount Sinai, he thundered forth. He tried to frighten Agostinelli, and through him Anna, by hinting at a possible accident and the calamities which would follow, for he then would prove inexorable. These were ineffective threats: Agostinelli, whose progress was swift and whose purse was still well-lined, declined to give up flying; and perhaps the forsaken friend, furious at such ingratitude, sometimes experienced, when glancing over the *faits divers* in the newspapers, an unspoken hope of discovering the news of an accident, the possibility of which he had foreseen and the consequences of which he had prophesied.[10]

In the meantime Bernard Grasset, somewhat worried about rumors according to which the author of *Du côté de chez Swann* had received an attractive offer from André Gide and might be contemplating a deal with the *Nouvelle revue française* for the publication of *Le côté de Guermantes* and *Le temps retrouvé*, had written Proust in the early spring of 1914 in order to enquire when he was planning to publish his second volume. Proust was torn between his desire to accept Gide's offer and his fear of not being "nice" to his first publisher—not to mention his doubts about his legal right to break his contract—and finally lacked the courage to leave Grasset. He however promised the *Nouvelle revue française* a few extracts from his next volume for an early issue. He naturally turned for this purpose to the sacrificed ending of *Du côté de chez Swann*, and selected from the remainder of his 1913 *placards* enough material for about fifty pages. These the maga-

[10] In *Du côté de chez Swann*, p. 435, Swann hopes that Odette will die in an accident and that he will thus be able to recover his serenity; in *Albertine disparue*, I, 96, Marcel will make a similar wish about Albertine.

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zine prepared for publication in the June 1st issue. But meanwhile a new misfortune was threatening Proust: an irrevocable catastrophe which suddenly was going to precipitate the crystallization of all the worries, the sorrows, and the sufferings which had been haunting him for over a year.

On Saturday, May 30, 1914, about five o'clock in the afternoon, at the Garbero Brothers Flying School, near Antibes, student-pilot Agostinelli took off at the controls of a monoplane. It was the second time he was flying solo; and his pretended wife Anna, as well as his brother Emile, were watching him from the ground. But, as he was banking for a turn over the Bay of the Angels, the spectators saw his plane suddenly side-slip and crash into the sea, several hundred yards from the shore. Until nightfall, boats cruised back and forth over the Bay: but neither the corpse nor the plane was recovered. On Sunday morning, May 31, the *Figaro* printed the news, in a few brutal lines; and a frantic telegram was delivered *boulevard Haussmann*, signed Anna.[11] Thus did Marcel Proust learn, in the darkness of his cloistered room, that his beloved companion, the nun of speed, the Saint Cecilia, the youthful saint of the wheel, had forever disappeared from his life.

On Monday, June 1st, the *Nouvelle revue française* published the first extracts from *Le côté de Guermantes* and announced a second instalment for its July 1st issue. But Proust, who for these extracts had exhausted the most interesting pages left over from 1913, had requested Grasset to print a few more *placards* to follow up. This new printing, which began on June 6, was completed on June 11 and filled 28 *placards;* then, on June 12, a second printing of the sacrificed ending of *Du côté de chez Swann* was undertaken: this was completed on June 22 and covered 38 *placards.* Thus the second volume announced in November 1913 under the title of *Le côté de Guermantes* was entirely in type in June 1914: consisting of 66 *placards,* it would have yielded—with due allowance for additions and corrections—about 528 pages and would have been approximately the same length as *Du côté de chez Swann.*

But Proust was unable to work. The death of Agostinelli, whose disfigured corpse had been fished out of the Mediterranean on June 7, had left him in utter disarray; and he had on his hands

[11] In *Albertine disparue,* it is through a telegram from Mme. Bontemps that Marcel is informed of the accident and death of Albertine in Touraine.

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a disconsolate widow and a disconsolate brother, who had both rushed back to Paris, trusting in his mercy, to beg for assistance. He was feeling desperately weary: he managed to carve out of the new *placards* a second set of extracts for the July 1st issue of the *Nouvelle revue française;* but he sent back to Grasset the whole batch of *placards,* which were swarming with mistakes and which he did not find the courage to correct. As a matter of fact, he had even lost the courage to live: and in those days he never took a taxi without hoping with all his heart that a bus would crash into it and put him out of his misery.

Undoubtedly, Proust the man still had to struggle in darkness, for many months to come; Proust the artist, however, presently began to recover. In the same way as, one year before, when tortured with jealousy, he had noticed from his own experience all the little details which his picture of Swann's jealousy was lacking, now, enriched with all the agonies he had suffered from the death of the person whom in this world he had loved most after his father and mother, he undertook to recast the whole unpublished portion of his novel, in order to give it this profundity which an artist can achieve only by digging remorselessly into the very depths of his own heart. And in the course of a few weeks he had already brought considerable corrections to the *placards* of *Le côté de Guermantes* when the war broke out.

Bernard Grasset was mobilized and closed his shop. Marcel Proust had found enough strength, on Saturday, August 1st, 1914, to accompany his brother, Assistant Surgeon-Major Robert Proust, to the *Gare de l'Est.* Then he returned to his gloomy apartment, where he soon found himself quite alone, for his valet was in turn called to the colours. Unable to serve, unable to work, he once more proceeded to Cabourg, about the first days of September, when Paris was in imminent danger of invasion. What a dangerous pilgrimage! He thought at first that it would be an excruciating ordeal to visit again, alone, the places he had so recently explored with a beloved companion; and then he felt that his sorrow was already losing some of its sting, and he feared that his memories would soon be submerged into oblivion. But, when he returned to Paris in the autumn, there he found his despair again, intact; and, with a morbid and tenacious curiosity, he endeavoured to communicate through more or less devious channels with all those who

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might have known Agostinelli, who had been his fellow students at the flying school, who had witnessed his death, who had attended his funeral.[12]

Albertine was not mentioned either in *Du côté de chez Swann* or in the 1914 *placards* of *Le côté de Guermantes* or, as far as can be ascertained, in the original draft of *Le temps retrouvé*.[13] But she now materializes and assumes a leading part in the novel. On November 3, 1915, in a letter to Mme. Scheikévitch, who was also grieving over the loss of a beloved one, Proust writes that he is summing up for her in six pages a six hundred page episode, which is utterly different from the rest of the novel and might find affinities of sorrow in her aching heart: the Albertine episode. A few days later, he sends her an autographed copy of *Du côté de chez Swann*, on the blank pages of which he has condensed in his own spidery handwriting the main phases of the liaison which he is now working into the unpublished portion of *A la recherche du temps perdu:* the appearance of Albertine on the beach at Balbec with a bunch of young girls; the growth of love and the growth of jealousy in Marcel's heart; the captivity of Albertine in Marcel's apartment in Paris, Marcel's despotic jealousy and then his growing lassitude; Albertine's unforeseen departure and Marcel's despair; the first symptoms and the intermittent progress of forgetfulness; Albertine's accidental death in Touraine and the revival of love and jealousy in Marcel; then the gradual obliteration of memory by habit and self-change; and finally complete solace through complete oblivion.

A marvelous transmutation. And also a marvelous catharsis, for, as the years pass away, Proust's references to his loss and his sorrow assume a different tone. In May 1916, he pathetically writes to René Blum, *à propos* of Bertrand de Fénelon's death: "Thus had I lost, shortly before the war, the person I loved most." About July 1917, he writes Walter Berry, in order to illustrate the inconsistent ferocity of the Mediterranean: "Four years ago it swallowed up, after he fell from his airplane, my dear secretary who was an Italian and used to type *Swann* for me." The chronol-

[12]Cf. in *Albertine disparue* Marcel's relentless and morbid curiosity about Albertine's life in Normandy and in Touraine.

[13]However, according to the plan published in November 1913, she apparently was scheduled to appear in the first chapter of *Le temps retrouvé*, entitled "A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs."

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ogy was wrong, and the tone rather flippant; but Proust was then professing a passion for Princess Soutzo, who lived at the Ritz: and this, according to some, was a convenient excuse for his wanderings through the corridors and servants' offices of the hotel, where he soon discovered a new secretary, a bright young man with an amazing gift for painting. Toward the end of 1918, when collecting his articles for publication in *Pastiches et mélanges*, he found the paragraphs he had devoted to Agostinelli in November 1907, and appended this footnote: "Little did I foresee, when I was writing these lines, that seven or eight years later this young man would ask me to type a book of mine, would train as a pilot under the name of Marcel Swann in which he kindly associated my Christian name and the name of one of my characters, and would find his death at twenty-six, in an airplane accident, off the shore of Antibes."

A frigid epitaph, on an empty grave. We must look elsewhere for Agostinelli's monument: it is in the mysterious shadows of his unfinished cathedral that Marcel Proust has secretly erected it, *amori et dolori sacrum*.

Poems

S. Raiziss

INTROVERT RANCH

In a narrow room the little ranch
Lives chilled between two walls
Of broken mountain; the sun no longer pries
Into the alcoves of that gulch
Nor carries gold surmise
Into the house, into the dim creatures.

Like a dropped handkerchief the garden lies;
Time has licked all paint
From the barn whose hip is out of joint;
The house has grown the shape and features

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Of endurance in such chronic dusk; the light's
Amnesia has the hound-dog's doubtful sight:
A stranger wonders how blind these milky eyes
That fawn with sick love and hollow stare.
He'd say the master's heart's a miser.
The trees braid their shadows black and spare;
Only a sheaf of pampas, godlike geyser,
Plays its blond streams against the wind
That blazing the gulley's corner stand
Forgotten.
People double their indifferent backs
To slow inexorable tasks
And speak when spoken to;
From windows faces take unsmiling stock of you.
They have wisdom without choice:
Rigorous and sullen they surrender
Like their kin of nature to her fateful poise;
Thoughts are ice-crags nine-tenths under;
Talk is word-bound, mostly guessed.
Sleep is clenched against them like a fist.

Planted down between the hills and seas,
They watch the muscled mountains coiled
In dreams like some chimera—hide
Of honey-color, liveoak eyes;
They gape at the brute Pacific where
It leaves its tooth-marks on unspoiled
And secret coves; at quiet tide,
At their appointed hour the still
Deer, the sepia silhouettes on yellow skies,
Come down from intervals along the shaven hill,
Come down to taste the pool and ponder ocean,
Standing at the arch without emotion.

They have this, the people, and uncommon nights
When that enormous hoop of light
Accomplishes itself around the moon:
Eternity at dark noon.

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Philip Horton

VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY PACELLI

"For you, dear newlyweds, the present hour
Is like a joyful hour in the sowing of a field
Prepared with love." Thus spake according to the press,
The man of God, Representative
Of Christ on Earth, in a purely pastoral discourse.
Richly, as in repletion, his Italian tongue,
Anointed with rationed Spanish oil, continues,
Tolls in his chambered mouth a solemn praise,
Blessing the promised joys of fecundity
And (these agitated times glissando)
"The sublime mission of giving life to innocent
Children, destined to aid their country."
It is not
This music that moves me, the lyric roundelay
Of procreation ever returning on itself,
Nor the powered scale of persuasion, practised in all
The chancelleries of Europe; not even the cunning
Of this man's mind, which weighted with present evil
Would yet pursue, fugue-like, its Christian fiction
And so busy our bodies meanwhile with begetting.
Not this, but muted and itself like music,
A counterpoint, miniscular pizzicato
That swarms the inner ear with warning. Listen.
It begins, a papery whisper, wasted suspiration.
It comes from something like bodies once, and grows
To palsied fiddlings, scraping of bone on bone;
Grows terribly to sight: a procession of moving children,
Pellagric, rickety, crippled with hunger, going
On arms and legs like crutches, their bloated bellies
Carried before like solemn small drums
Strapped on in play, but now grown strangely heavy
And not to be undone; and all of them showing
Pale pigeon-breasts, like fragile prows,
Already pointing deathward.
Not music, no,—

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But stridently, not to be stopped, overstriding
The pastoral score, this clamorous photograph, montage
That stares from between the ordered bars and staves
And soundlessly, as if all the world were deaf,
Screams, and rolls its cretin head, and screams,
Crying all brides and grooms this present hour
In Christ's pity to leave off, to thrust apart,
And spill their smoking seed, like Onan's, on the ground.

Barbara Howes

"NO HIDING PLACE DOWN THERE"

The South softened and wooed me,
I soon lost
The fettered Northern glance
And covert search for warmth,
Letting time ramble past.

Musing,
I see the days
Float in the sun-drenched air,
Whose sly timelessness devours them
As sun the unmarked dew.
Tranquilly I look where
The land runs out on all sides to the sky,
Delights in its horizons,
A splendid and exhaustless tide;
And, deep, bears easily its warm expanse,
Carries the full intent of nature,—
Such tropic possibility,
Such lazy, latent, sure-blooming growth-sympathy
From cotton's honest bolls to green
Frieze of wistaria on old walls.

Beyond,
Hills sown with timber till they meet the sky,
And cypresses' black grandeur; there
The blurring smoke of night will rise
Pierced only by a bird's untimely call.

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Yet have I known the South?
A scene
Night and forgetfulness cannot dispel
Is less kind
And gloves my mind with fear and foreboding;
No haze curtains the road
Where death with such insistence strews
Violence among stray and homeless beasts.
Terrible emblem of some rot within,
Printed a thousand-fold,
The South wears
This casual knotted mass of blood and fur,
Known only to the carrion rain and sun.

Edouard Roditi

THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

Bergson, who knew best why we laugh,
Now laughs in peace, but not as we.

He timed the ticking of his soul,
Predictable as any clock,

Till death within him, like a time-bomb,
Exploded just when his known world

—A needed dream where he had lived—
Vanished, no longer needing him.

Freud too, to whom all history
Was simple as one dreamer's dream,

Saw this vast dreamer suddenly
Rise in a paranoiac fit

To force its folly on the world.
Exiled as reason, Freud soon died.

And we, who now by clocks and laws
Of this dark nightmare yet must live,

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Each laughing at the other's tears,
All born too late or killed too soon,

Wonder when one sun will return
To light and time all lives alike.

Edouard Roditi

THE UNIFORM

To wear a blood-red uniform
John left the plough and joined the army.
He saw the world and kept his form,
Lived in the pink: those days were palmy.

Armies, at peace,
Are kept like tarts;
Make love an art
And war a sport.

But when John Fed-up left the army
John Guardsman was John Civvie;
And hungry John saw days less palmy,
Too proud to be a navvy.

His job was joy.
Now he must learn
To make sport pay
And pleasure earn.

John walks the streets, strolls in the park.
His coat is torn, his shoes need mending.
He picks up buggers after dark.
How does he live? Just bending.

And John Ploughboy is John Joyboy
Who tries blackmail and lands in jail,
Far from the fields, the uniform.
A hopeful youngster, now a hustler,
John keeps on swearing: "Catch me again wearing
My King and Country's bloody blood-red uniform!"

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The Intellectuals' Tradition

William Phillips

1.

IT IS GENERALLY RECOGNIZED that in the course of its alienation from society modern art has developed a highly-organized regime of its own; yet the implications of this fact have hardly been explored in critical writing. Traditional criticism, at least of the more formal variety, has tended to fetishize the idea of detachment to the point of regarding the individual writer, rather than the creative grouping, as a whole, as the unit of alienation. While, at the other extreme, the historical—or Marxist—school of criticism fixed the meanings and mutations of art in the social pattern; and though it granted a separate status to intellectual activity, its emphasis was almost completely on historical determination.

The Marxist approach was, of course, primarily concerned with the political and ideological origins of esthetic movements. And its doctrine of art as one of the modes by which society becomes conscious of itself—class conscious in the present system—was undoubtedly an advance over such traditional mystifications as the idea that a work of art amounts to the sum of its parts. Yet the Marxist theory, it seems to me, is a kind of half-truth, overstressing the correspondences between the historical context and the work itself, and leading to endless theoretical maneuvers as its exponents attempted to hold on to the autonomous values of literature in the very act of denying them. The apparent contradiction was never resolved.

For, surely, the art of the past is too full of ambiguities and obsessive designs to be regarded simply as an articulation of class needs—unless, of course, one is ready to accept the doctrinaire principle that anything short of a revolutionary view is an instrument of conservative opinion. What class is served, for example, by Balzac's research into the patterns of status and intrigue, or by Poe's experiments in sensation? Considered as a whole, modern literature is a continual recoil from the practices and values of society toward some form of self-sufficiency, be it moral, or physical, or merely historical, with repeated fresh starts from the bohemian underground as each new movement runs itself out; yet no

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major class exhibits any such compulsion to withdraw from the conditions of its existence. Nor has modern art taken for its subject the common denominator of experience. On the contrary, its great protagonist has been the figure of the artist, himself, through his successive phases of assertion, alienation, and survival. And more recently, in a kind of reversal of the process, he has been loaded by Thomas Mann with the burdens of civilization, while novelists like Joyce and Kafka have recast him in the role of mankind—as an estranged human abstract. In the work of Joyce, as in the contemporary tendency to make painting itself the actual content of painting, this result is achieved largely by an identification of the subject with the medium.

2.

It would be more accurate, I believe, to locate the immediate sources of art in the intelligentsia, which, since the renaissance at least, has made up a distinct occupational grouping within society. For the special properties of modern literature, as well as the other arts, are readily associated with the characteristic moods and interests of the intellectuals. True enough, they are, themselves, outgrowths of the historic process, their social position depending, ultimately, on the relative power and prestige of the contending classes; even their illusion of spiritual freedom can be explained as a sublimation of their material bondage. And their literary efforts, do in a measure generalize our full social experience, insofar as that is, after all, the reality that creates the need as well as the possibilities of the artists's estrangement, and it is to this experience that he turns for his parables of frustration and fulfillment. But modern art, with its highly complicated techniques, its plaintive egotism, its messianic desperation, could not have come into being except through the formation by the intelligentsia of a distinct group culture, thriving on its very anxiety over survival and its consciousness of being an elite. In no other way could it have been able to resist being absorbed by the norms of belief and behavior; and society, for its part, while it could tolerate an enduring cult of intellectual abnormality, would certainly have had little patience with outbursts of non-conformity in esthetic matters by individuals who in every other respect remained within the fold. Nor is it at all likely that any other mode of art, springing more directly from the people as a whole, should have developed in our

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social order, since most of the existing modern equivalents of folk-art, which some populist critics still exalt as the true voice of the masses, are little more than the remains of earlier esthetic movements adapted to the needs of popular taste. In fact, all new and genuinely creative impulses in our time, as Trotsky once observed in a study of the Russian symbolists, tend to take the form of bohemianism, as the *avant-garde* in a kind of permanent mutiny against the regime of utility and conformity, proclaims its faith in the freedom, the irresponsibility, and the higher integrity of art.

Now, the complexion of the intelligentsia has undergone many changes—their extremities of belief being a fairly late development—but throughout their history, and despite their growing tendencies toward atomization, they have maintained the kind of institutional stability vital to the production of art. Obviously, it was through such a unified and self-perpetuating group that our cultural continuity has been preserved, and the individual artist has been provided with a sustaining tradition of convention and experiment, without which he could never hope to be more than a gifted eccentric. In addition, however, as society lost its earlier unity of belief, which the artist shared and took as his starting point, the very plight of the intelligentsia and the more or less homogeneous outlook it had acquired served as a philosophic mooring for the modern artist. Thus, even today, while their bent is entirely against any kind of social authority or discipline, nevertheless the intelligentsia, in their role of intellectual conservation and in their tightly knit traditions, perform for modern times a function that an institution like the church, for instance, had in the medieval period. And, in an historical sense, the church was actually the organized body of intellectuals in the middle ages, for at the height of its dominion it was the conveyor of all secular, as well as spiritual, culture, and it was set apart from the laity as much by its intellectual as by its hieratical distinction. The church, like its modern successors, tried jealously to maintain its cultivated and inbred esthetic traditions by absorbing, sometimes through actual physical possession, the more-popular forms of folk-art at the time. In opposition to such spontaneous performances as the sword plays, for example, which arose in the primitive agricultural community much the same way as the early dramatic rites of the Greeks, the church used all its powers to keep art primarily a vehicle for its own myth.

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If the secular intellectuals who came to the fore with the rise of a bourgeois society in Europe were not bound by any common creed, still they managed through the years to build what might be called a tradition of approach or perspective. In the realm of literature this tradition amounted to a highly elaborate sense of its achievements and its tasks, thus providing the creative imagination with a fund of literary experiences—a kind of style of work—to draw on. For the old-world writer, from about the seventeenth century on, had to mediate between the great scramble of the new order and the authority of the past, between the boundless perspectives for the individual personality and the material forces tending more and more to confine it, between scepticism and faith, between the city and the country. . . . And he was able to do so to the extent that he shared the generalized vision of the intelligentsia as a whole; or where any great divergence of belief existed, he simply took his cue from the collective opinion of some dissident group. The fact is that European literature made little headway in the smaller, marginal countries—or appeared late in a backward region like Russia—that, on the contrary, it enjoyed the greatest success in those nations that set the social and intellectual pace for the rest of the continent. (It was, after all. in Italy, the original home of the new mercantilism, that the beginnings of humanist theory and renaissance art first appeared.) Not only did most of the problems and crises of European expansion come to a head in France and England (and in Germany somewhat later), but, in addition, these countries were sufficiently prosperous and were becoming sufficiently urbanized to support a scientific and literary intelligentsia. Hence they were able to rationalize the general European predicament and to provide a tentative equilibrium of opinion for all political and intellectual pursuits. While the lagging industrial nations had to be content with sporadic cultural expressions, which were largely an adaptation of the more advanced currents to the local ethos, the great tradition of French and English art maintained itself at the crest of the upheavals and large-scale movements that marked the growth of bourgeois society. One can hardly conceive of a Julien Sorel, balancing himself on the contradictions between ambition and personality, in, say, Warsaw or Madrid—or the domestic drama of the eighteenth century being born outside the boom of British trade at the time and the plebian sentimentality that accompanied it.

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It is plain that we have here more than a coincidence of geographical and social factors. Indeed, the major impulses of European art can be traced in practically every instance to the existence of an active intelligentsia, crucially involved in its contemporary history, and sufficiently self-conscious to be able to assimilate some new experience to the norms of its past. One might almost put down as an esthetic law that continuity is the condition for creative invention. Thus the dream of fulfillment released by the French revolution lingered on in the modern mind: disengaged from its social frame and turned inward, it served, at one pole, as a basis for the series of movements dedicated to the primacy of art; while at the other extreme, stripped of its critical and tendencious spirit, it lay behind the celebrations of progress that appeared toward the end of the last century. In fact, the increasing complexity of contemporary literature is at least partially to be accounted for by the variety of traditional memories and associations that fill the consciousness of the writer today. And in such works as *The Wasteland* and *Finnegans Wake*, where this natural tendency has been converted into a deliberate method, both Joyce and, to a less extent, Eliot have actually set out to dissolve their immediate perceptions in the timeless reality of the past.

3.

Now, in the case of American literature, unlike that of the old world, we have a kind of negative illustration of the relation of the intelligentsia to art. For the outstanding features—not to speak of the failures—of our national culture can be largely explained by the inability of our native intelligentsia to achieve a detached and self-sufficient group existence that would permit it to sustain its traditions through succeeding epochs, and to keep abreast of European intellectual production. One need hardly stress such symptoms in American writing as shallowness, paucity of values, a statistical approach to reality, and the compensatory qualities of forthrightness, plebianism, and a kind of matter-of-fact humanism: they have been noted in a number of historical studies; and, to be sure, our cultural innocence has been practically a standing complaint of American criticism. As Howells had Bromfield Corey remark in *The Rise of Silas Lapham:* "A Greek got his civilization by talking and looking, and in some measure a

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Parisian may still do it. But we, who live remote from history and monuments, we must read or we must barbarize."

Obviously, our history has been too rapid and too expansive for the American mind to settle down and take stock of itself. Moreover, the city, as the symbol of modern civilization, did not fully emerge until after the Civil War, with the result that our intellectual life, in its formative years, could not escape the atomizing influence of ruralism. And, what is perhaps more important, the lusty pioneer motif running through American letters, with its strong tinge of hinterland philosophy, exerted a constant regional pull on the intelligentsia and tended to sanction an individual rather than a group solution of the cultural problem.

Our early literary expressions were, of course, little more than British amenities feeling their way through strange, primitive surroundings. Nor could the Puritan outlook serve as the groundwork for a tradition. Essentially prohibitive and regional, it was a kind of frontier Calvinism, destined to be superseded by a more materialist creed—in keeping with the rough-and-tumble spirit of aggrandizement that was possessing the country as a whole. Hawthorne, of course, whose imagination was tortured by the Puritan demons of guilt and decay, was the prime literary beneficiary of the Puritan mind; but, on the whole, it entered into later writing mainly as a negative factor, a repressed strain, as in Melville, where it was in a sense a purged element; and through the nineteenth century it persisted largely as a characteristic moral wholesomeness.

The Concord school may be said to mark the first appearance, in full intellectual dress, of an American intelligentsia. Revolting against the all-absorbing commercialism of the day and against the bleakness of the Puritan heritage, they set out quite consciously to form, as Emerson put it, "a learned class," and to assimilate the culture of Europe into a native tradition. Yet, just as they had no established past to draw on, so they were unable to transmit a full-blown literary mentality to succeeding generations. Emerson was, of course, intoxicated with the pioneer spirit, with the hard-bitten realism of the plain people, and his bias was strongly agrarian in its emphasis on bare hands and the self-reliant mind. He was essentially a transcendental commoner, and for all his cultural yearnings, his philosophy was at bottom an affirmation of individual fulfillment in a boundless American expansion. Thus,

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in later years he turned upon New England, the seat of his own cultural development, to cast a loving eye on the turbulent settlements of the West, where he found the dawn of our native genius. No wonder, then, that the entire tendency, of which Emerson was, perhaps, the most representative figure, was soon reabsorbed, in the main, by the life and philosophy of the general mass, whose premises it accepted, and to whom it made its prime appeal.

This, in essence, is the story of American letters: momentary efforts by solitary writers or by intellectual groups to differentiate themselves and to set a new current in motion, with the inevitable petering out, and the necessity for a fresh start over again. Hence our unusual number of literary sports. By the time Whitman, for example, was ready to affirm again the democratic ethos and the frontier excitements of the new cities, he had to start from scratch, with the result that his vision was largely a matter of itemized experience, devoid of those central symbols and values that are handed down by a creative tradition. The case of Poe is even more striking: he was the first truly bohemian writer in America (if we except the peculiar rustic bohemianism of Thoreau), and throughout his life practically the only one. Hence he lacked those professional resources of esthetic and social subversion that are normally provided by an organized bohemia. In only a negative, escapist sense, did his poetry have a characteristically bohemian content; although it gave the lead to Baudelaire, his poetry fell short of the programmatic experimentalism of his French contemporaries; even his essays, as Henry James once remarked, were excessively amateurish and provincial; and his verse constantly tended, in an over-felicitous fashion, toward a lovelorn provincialism. What saved Poe, I suppose, was a happy coincidence of talent, morbidity, and the capacity for absorbing those literary strains that served the needs of his sensibility.

Not until the last two or three decades did any literary "schools," promoted by an active literary intelligentsia, make their appearance here. But their inspiration was largely European, and, in a basic sense, they never really succeeded in lifting themselves above the conceptual plane of American writing as a whole. Consider the Marxist or proletarian school; perhaps the most confident, aggressive, and most thoroughly international of recent trends. One might have expected that a movement so completely regulated by an organized body of left-wing intellectuals, committed to an

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all-embracing philosophy and to the principle that literature must serve as a vehicle for revolutionary ideas—that such a movement would have been able to grasp the effects of our social experience on our national mythology in more significant terms than the simple rites of awakening and conversion. As it was, radical novelists in this country took the short cut to integration by substituting data for values and the specious unity of the narrative for the interplay of historical meanings. Sharing the general aversion and distrust of ideological fiction, they failed to create a single intellectual character—either revolutionary or conservative—thus depriving themselves of their very medium of understanding, for it is only through the consciousness of such a character that it is possible, it seems to me, to depict the modulations and tensions of belief that make up the political movement.

If any one figure can be said to be a symbol of our entire culture, it is Henry Adams, whose active life covered almost the entire phase of our modern development and whose work sounded its principal themes. In its spiritual bafflements, its peculiarly native mixture of materialism and religious feeling, its desperate search for some central tradition, his *Education* reads like a diary of our speculative conscience. A product of the New England mind, he was soon cast adrift by what he called the "multiplicity" of the world—his repeated use of the word suggests a morbid fondness for it—and he began his life-long probe into history for some principle of unity, some contemporary equivalent of the ideal unity he believed to have existed in the thirteenth century. In a measure, he thought he discovered this principle in a dynamic law of history, but it served only to confirm his dilemma, for the law merely proved all over again the increasing complexity and disintegration of society; and, besides, his experimental bent led him to distrust theoretical constructions because they tend to "falsify the facts." He turned to science. But he could not overcome his feeling that its authority was limited to purely secular matters; and even in this sphere the prevailing chaos all but defied the efforts to create order, or, as Adams put it, "the multiplicity baffling science." Finally, there was God, the supreme and infallible synthesizing force; yet he could derive no conclusive satisfaction from his faith because his Calvinist leanings toward a personal creed precluded any belief in a single unifying system. What was left?—nothing but to return, after completing the cycle of his researches, to a

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kind of methodological groping for a common denominator of belief. "The old formulas had failed, and a new one had to be made. . . . One sought no absolute truth. One sought only a spool on which to wind the thread of history without breaking it."

In a sense, this has been our persistent tradition—this periodic striving for a unified outlook and the inevitable return to a clean slate all over again—though one hesitates to describe it as such because it is exactly this discontinuity that is the mark of our inability to form a complex, intellectual tradition. In this respect, the American intelligentsia exhibits a kind of ambivalent psyche, torn between the urge toward some degree of autonomy and an equally strong tendency to self-effacement, for it is largely its natural inclination to merge with the popular mind that has prevented any such lasting intellectual differentiation as has been achieved in European art and thought. Generally, these dual impulses have found expression in the repetitive cycle of our literary history, but on occasion they have also appeared side by side—in figures like Emerson and Whitman, and, to some extent, Dreiser,—as a combination of populist sensibility with some broad cultural vision. And, is not the predilection for the real, the fatal attraction for the overwhelming minutiae of every-day life, that characterizes so much of American writing, but the creative equivalent of the instability of the intelligentsia?

In the last few decades, we have run the gamut of three important trends, and we are at present in the midst of one more movement to stir the embers of the past, to discover once more the secrets of the national spirit. Yet, except for the natural persistence of certain states of mind, one cannot discern any organic linkage between these successive currents. The regional nostalgia that appeared in such writers as Masters or Frost, which, incidentally, can hardly be said to be a direct outgrowth of the earlier expansive naturalism, was literally brushed aside by the great rebellion of the twenties against provincialism, gentility, and the native bent for minute self-portraiture. At one pole, were the provocations of modernism, with their libertarian effects in the social sphere; at the other stood figures like Mencken and Lewis, attacking the moral and intellectual proprieties. As for the Marxist school, which held sway in the following decade, and whose demise was as sudden and mechanical as its birth, it could scarcely have been expected to establish a line of continuity, since, in addition to the strong resis-

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tance it naturally encountered, it believed one of its chief historical assignments to be the task of erasing the traces of the bourgeois past. But it is surely ironic that the current appeal to immerse ourselves in the splendors of the American tradition should ignore the critical acquisitions and revaluations of these last decades.

In a typically compulsive way, this effort to frame a new cultural myth has not only made a clean break with the Marxist outlook, but in its special concern with the indigenous, it is patently a negation of everything the twenties stood for. Thus we have the astonishing phenomenon of a writer like Van Wyck Brooks now forsaking his earlier studies in creative frustration for a gayer—and more successful—version of the literary life in America. One cannot find, it seems to me, a surer sign of the lack of a *felt* tradition—of one that can be assumed—than in such a wilful endeavor to invoke it into being. In a recent address Brooks, who is apparently intent on carrying the quest for a native heritage to the most comic and painful extremes, called for a purge of such figures as Joyce and Eliot—of the truly characteristic works of the modern tradition. As for a "usable past"—Brooks has finally discovered it in the humanitarian pieties of none other than Whittier.

Our concern at the moment, however, is not with the career or the latest views of Van Wyck Brooks, but with the current epidemic of literary nationalism in which Brooks is simply an advanced case. And what is this nationalist revival—this militant provincialism—if not a new phase of self-abnegation on the part of the intelligentsia? Once again they are renouncing the values of group-detachment as they permit themselves to be drawn into the tides of prevailing opinion. In a complete reversal of role, they have come to echo all the stock objections to the complex and ambiguous symbolization of modern writing: and the improvised tradition they now offer in its place—is it not the popular, Sunday version of our history? The immediate effect is bound to be some kind of creative disorientation. But even more important, from the viewpoint of our culture as a whole, it is evident that this constant fluctuation between dissidence and conformity, this endless game of hide-and-seek with the past, cannot but thwart the production of a mature and sustained literature. And the intelligentsia in America, for all its efforts to preserve its intellectual identity, seems to have a deep-seated need to accept as its own—if only periodically—the official voice of society.

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London Letter

London, Aug. 17, 1941.

Dear Editors,

You asked me to send you another London letter, and though you left me free to choose what I should write about you added that your readers might be interested to hear some more about the Home Guard. I will give you some notes on the Home Guard, as much as I have space for, but I think my main subject this time ought to be the USSR's entry into the war. It has overshadowed everything in the last seven weeks, and I think it is now possible to make some sort of rough analysis of the state of British opinion.

THE ANGLO-SOVIET ALLIANCE

The most striking thing about the Anglo-Soviet alliance has been its failure to cause any split in the country or any serious political repercussion whatever. It is true that Hitler's invasion of the USSR took everyone here very much by surprise. If the alliance had come about in 1938 or 1939, as it might have done, after long and bitter controversies, with the Popular Fronters shouting on one side and the Tory press playing Red Russia for all it was worth on the other, there would have been a first-rate political crisis, probably a general election and certainly the growth of an openly pro-Nazi party in Parliament, the Army, etc. But by June 1941 Stalin had come to appear as a very small bogey compared with Hitler, the pro-Fascists had mostly discredited themselves, and the attack happened so suddenly that the advantages and disadvantages of a Russian alliance had not even had time to be discussed.

One fact that this new turn of the war has brought out is that there are now great numbers of English people who have no special reaction towards the USSR. Russia, like China or Mexico, is simply a mysterious country a long way away, which once had a revolution, the nature of which has been forgotten. All the hideous controversies about the purges, the Five Year Plans, the Ukraine famine, etc., have simply passed over the average newspaper-reader's head. But as for the rest, the people who have some definite pro-Russian or anti-Russian slant, they are split up into several sharply-defined blocks, of which the following are the ones that matter:

The rich. The real bourgeoisie are subjectively anti-Russian, and cannot possibly become otherwise. The existence of large numbers of wealthy parlour Bolsheviks does not alter this fact, because these people

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invariably belong to the decadent third-generation rentier class. Those who are *of* the capitalist class would regard the destruction of the Soviet Union by Hitler with, at best, mixed feelings. But it is an error to suppose that they are plotting direct treachery or that the handful capable of doing so are likely to gain control of the State. Churchill's continuance in office is a guarantee against that.

The working class. All the more thoughtful members of the British working class are mildly and vaguely pro-Russian. The shock caused by the Russian war against Finland was real enough, but it depended on the fact that nothing was happening at that time in the major war, and it has been completely forgotten. But it would probably be a mistake to imagine that the fact of Russia being in the war will in itself stimulate the British working class to greater efforts and greater sacrifices. In so far as strikes and wage disputes during the past two years have been due to deliberate trouble-making by the Communists, they will of course cease, but it is doubtful whether the Communists have ever been able to do more than magnify legitimate grievances. The grievances will still be there, and fraternal messages from *Pravda* will not make much difference to the feelings of the dock-worker unloading during an air-raid or the tired munition-worker who has missed the last tram home. At one point or another the question of working-class loyalty to Russia is likely to come up in some such form as this: if the Government show signs of letting the Russians down, will the working class take steps to force a more active policy upon them? In that moment I believe it will be found that though a sort of loyalty to the Soviet Union still exists—must exist, so long as Russia is the only country even *pretending* to be a workers' State—it is no longer a positive force. The very fact that Hitler dares to make war on Russia is proof of this. Fifteen years ago such a war would have been impossible for any country except perhaps Japan, because the common soldiers could not have been trusted to use their weapons against the Socialist Fatherland. But that kind of loyalty has been gradually wasted by the nationalistic selfishness of Russian policy. Old-fashioned patriotism is now a far stronger force than any kind of internationalism, or any ideas about the Socialist Fatherland, and this fact also will be reflected in the strategy of the war.

The Communists. I do not need to tell you anything about the shifts of official Communist policy during the past two years, but I am not certain whether the mentality of the Communist intelligentsia is quite the same in the USA as here. In England the Communists whom it is possible to respect are factory workers, but they are not very numerous, and precisely because they are usually skilled workmen and loyal comrades they cannot always be rigidly faithful to the "line." Between September 1939 and June 1941 they do not seem to have attempted any definite sabotage of arms production, although the logic of Communist policy demanded this. The middle-class Communists, however, are a different proposition.

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They include most of the official and unofficial leaders of the party, and with them must be lumped the greater part of the younger literary intelligentsia, especially in the universities. As I have pointed out elsewhere, the "Communism" of these people amounts simply to nationalism and leader-worship in their most vulgar forms, transferred to the USSR. Their importance at this moment is that with the entry of Russia into the war they may regain the influence in the press which they had between 1935 and 1939 and lost during the last two years. The *News-Chronicle*, after the *Herald* the leading leftwing daily (circulation about 1,400,000) is already busy whitewashing the men whom it was denouncing as traitors a little while back. The so-called People's Convention, led by D. N. Pritt (Pritt is a Labour M.P. but is always claimed by Communists as an "underground" member of their party, evidently with truth) is still in existence but has abruptly reversed its policy. If the Communists are allowed the kind of publicity that they were getting in 1938, they will both consciously and unconsciously sow discord between Britain and the USSR. What they wish for is not the destruction of Hitler and the re-settlement of Europe, but a vulgar military triumph for their adopted Fatherland, and they will do their best to insult public opinion here by transferring as much as possible of the prestige of the war to Russia, and by constantly casting doubts on Britain's good faith. The danger of this kind of thing ought not to be underrated. The Russians themselves, however, probably grasp how the land lies and will act accordingly. If we have a long war ahead of us it is not to their advantage that there should be disaffection in this country. But in so far as they can get a hearing, the British Communists must be regarded as one of the forces acting against Anglo-Russian unity.

The Catholics. There are supposed to be some two million Catholics in this country, the bulk of them very poor Irish labourers. They vote Labour and act as a sort of silent drag on Labour Party policy, but are not sufficiently under the thumb of their priests to be Fascist in sympathy. The importance of the middle- and upper-class Catholics is that they are extremely numerous in the Foreign Office and the Consular Service, and also have a good deal of influence in the press, though less than formerly. The "born" Catholics of the old Catholic families are less ultra-montane and more ordinarily patriotic than the converted intellectuals (Ronald Knox, Arnold Lunn, etc., etc.), who have very much the same mentality, *mutatis mutandis*, as the British Communists. I suppose I need not repeat the history of their pro-Fascist activities in the past. Since the outbreak of war they have not dared to be openly pro-Hitler, but have done their propaganda indirectly by fulsome praises of Petain and Franco. Cardinal Hinsley, founder of the Sword of the Spirit Movement (Catholic democracy), seems to be sincerely anti-Nazi according to his lights, but represents only one section of Catholic opinion. As soon as Hitler invaded the USSR, the Catholic press announced that we must take advantage of the

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respite that this gave us, but "no alliance with godless Russia." Significantly, the Catholic papers became much more anti-Russian when it became apparent that the Russians were resisting successfully. No one who has studied Catholic literature during the past ten years can doubt that the bulk of the hierarchy and the intelligentsia would side with Germany as against Russia if they had a quarter of a chance. Their hatred of Russia is really venomous, enough even to disgust an anti-Stalinist like myself, though their propaganda is necessarily old-fashioned (Bolshevik atrocities, nationalisation of women, etc.) and does not make much impression on working-class people. When the Russian campaign is settled one way or the other, i.e. when Hitler is in Moscow or the Russians show signs of invading Europe, they will come out openly on Hitler's side, and they will certainly be to the fore if any plausible terms are suggested for a compromise peace. If anything corresponding to a Petain government were established here, it would have to lean largely on the Catholics. They are the only really conscious, logical, intelligent enemies that democracy has got in England, and it is a mistake to despise them.

So much for the various currents of opinion. I began this letter some days ago, and since then the feeling that we are not doing enough to help the Russians has noticeably intensified. The favourite quip now is that what we are giving Russia is "all aid short of war." Even the Beaverbrook press repeats this. Also, since Russia entered the war there has been a cooling-off in people's feelings towards the USA. The Churchill-Roosevelt declaration caused, I believe, a good deal of disappointment. Where Churchill had gone was an official secret but seems to have been widely known, and most people expected the outcome to be America's entry into the war, or at least the occupation of some more strategic points on the Atlantic. People are saying now that the Russians are fighting and the Americans are talking, and the saying that was current last year, "sympathy to China, oil to Japan," begins to be repeated.

. . . . . .

THE HOME GUARD

This force, then known as the Local Defence Volunteers, was raised last spring in response to a radio appeal by Anthony Eden, following on the success of the German parachute troops in Holland. It got a quarter of a million recruits in the first twenty-four hours. The numbers are now somewhere between a million and a half and two millions; they have fluctuated during the past year, but with a tendency to increase. Except for a small nucleus of administrative officers and NCO instructors attached from the regular army, it is entirely part-time and unpaid. Apart from training, the Home Guard relieves the army of some of its routine patrols, pickets on buildings, etc., and does a certain amout of ARP work. The amount of time given up to the Home Guard by ordinary members would vary be-

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tween five and twenty-five hours a week. Since the whole thing is voluntary there is no way of enforcing attendance, but the habitual absentees are usually asked to resign, and the inactive membership at any one time would not be more than ten per cent. In the case of invasion the Home Guard will be put on the same disciplinary basis as the regular army and members will be paid for their services, all ranks receiving the same rate of payment. In the beginning the Home Guard was a heterogeneous force and structurally rather similar to the early Spanish militias, but it has been gradually brigaded on the lines of the regular army, and all the ordinary contingents are affiliated to the regiments belonging to their locality. But factories, railways and Government offices have their own separate units, which are responsible only for the defence of their own premises.

The strategic idea of the Home Guard is static defence in *complete* depth, i.e. from one coast of England to the other. The tactical idea is not so much to defeat an invader as to hold him up till the regular troops can get at him. It is not intended that the Home Guard shall manœuvre in large numbers or over large areas. In practice it probably could not be operated in any larger unit than the Company, and no one contingent could advance or retreat more than a few miles. The intention is that any invader who crosses any section of the country will always, until he reaches the sea coast, have innumerable small bands of enemies both behind and in front of him. As to *how* the invader can best be resisted, theories have varied, chiefly as a result of observation of the different campaigns abroad. At the beginning the intention was simply to deal with parachutists, but the events in France and the Low Countries had caused an exaggerated fear of Fifth Columnists, and the authorities had evidently some notion of turning the Home Guard into a sort of auxiliary police force. This idea came to nothing because the men who had joined only wanted to fight the Germans (in June 1940 the invasion was expected to happen almost immediately), and in the chaotic conditions of the time they had to do their organizing for themselves. When enough weapons and uniforms had been distributed to make the Home Guard look something like soldiers, the tendency was to turn them into ordinary infantry of the pre-blitzkrieg type. Then the success of the Germans in getting their armoured divisions across the sea to Libya shifted the emphasis to anti-tank fighting. Somewhat later the loss of Crete showed what can be done by parachutists and air-borne troops, and tactics for dealing with them were worked out. Finally the struggle of the Russian guerillas behind the German lines led to a renewed emphasis on guerilla tactics and sabotage. All of these successive tendencies are reflected in the voluminous literature, official and unofficial, which has already grown up round the Home Guard.

The Home Guard can by now be regarded as a serious force, capable of strong resistance for at any rate a short period. No invader could travel

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more than a few miles through open country or more than a few hundred yards in the big towns without coming upon a knot of armed men. Morale can be relied on absolutely, though willingness to commit sabotage and go on fighting in theoretically occupied territory will probably vary according to the political complexion of different units. There are great and obvious difficulties in the way of keeping a force of this kind in the field for more than a week or two at a time, and if there should be prolonged fighting in England the Home Guard would probably be merged by degrees in the regular army and lose its local and voluntary character. The other great difficulty is in the supply of officers. Although there is in theory no class discrimination, the Home Guard is in practice officered on a class basis more completely than is the case in the regular army. Nor is it easy to see how this could have been avoided, even if the wish to avoid it had been there. In any sort of army people from the upper and middle classes will tend to get the positions of command—this happened in the early Spanish militias and had also happened in the Russian civil war—and in a spare-time force the average working man cannot possibly find enough time to do the administrative routine of a platoon-commander or company-commander. Also, the Government makes no financial contribution, except for a token payment when men are on duty all night, and the provision of weapons and uniforms. One cannot command troops without constantly incurring small expenses, and £50 a year would be the very minimum that any commissioned officer spends on his unit. What all this has meant in practice is that nearly all commands are held by retired colonels, people with "private" incomes or, at best, wealthy business men. A respectable proportion of the officers are too old to have caught up with the 1914 war, let alone anything subsequent. In the case of prolonged fighting it might be necessary to get rid of as many as half the officers. The rank and file know how matters stand and would probably devise some method of electing their own officers if need be. The election of officers is sometimes discussed among the lower ranks, but it has never been practiced except, I think, in some of the factory units.

The personnel of the Home Guard is not quite the same now as it was at the beginning. The men who flocked into the ranks in the first few days were almost all of them men who had fought in the last war and were too old for this one. The weapons that were distributed, therefore, went into the hands of people who were more or less anti-fascist but politically uneducated. The only leavening was a few class-conscious factory-workers and a handful of men who had fought in the Spanish civil war. The Left as usual had failed to see its opportunity—the Labour Party could have made the Home Guard into its own organisation if it had acted vigorously in the first few days—and in leftwing circles it was fashionable to describe the Home Guard as a Fascist organisation. Later the idea that when weapons are being distributed it is as well to get hold of some of them began to sink in, and a certain number of leftwing intellectuals found

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their way into the ranks. It has never been possible to get a big influx from the Labour Party, however; the most willing recruits have always been the people whose political ideal would be Churchill. The chief educative force within the movement has been the training school which was started by Tom Wintringham, Hugh Slater and others, especially in the first few months, before they were taken over by the War Office. Their teaching was purely military, but with its insistence on guerilla methods it had revolutionary implications which were perfectly well grasped by many of the men who listened to it. The Communist party from the first forbade its members to join the Home Guard and conducted a vicious campaign of libel against Wintringham and Co. During recent months the military call-up has almost stripped the Home Guard of men between 20 and 40, but at the same time there has been an influx of working-class boys of about 17. Most of them are quite unpolitical in outlook and when asked their reason for joining say that they want to get some military training against the time when they are called up, three years hence. This reflects the fact that many English people can now hardly imagine a time when there will be no war. There is also a fair number of foreigners in the Home Guard. In the panic period last year they were rigidly excluded. One of my own first jobs was to go round pacifying would-be members who had been rejected because they were not of British extraction on both sides. One man had been turned down because one of his parents was a foreigner and had not been naturalised till 1902. Now these ideas have been dropped and the London units contain Russians, Czechs, Poles, Indians, Negroes and Americans; no Germans or Italians, however. I will not swear that the prevailing outlook in the Home Guard is more "left" than it was a year ago. It reflects the general outlook of the country, which for a year past has turned this way and that like a door on its hinges. But the political discussions that one hears in canteens and guard-rooms are much more intelligent than they were, and the social shake-up among men of all classes who have now been forced into close intimacy for a considerable time has done a lot of good.

Up to a point one can foresee the future of the Home Guard. Even should it become clear that no invasion is likely it will not be disbanded before the end of the war, and probably not then. It wll play an important part if there is any attempt at a Petain peace, or in any internal fighting after the war. It already exerts a slight political influence on the regular army, and would exert more under active service conditions. It first came into being precisely because England is a conservative country where the law-abidingness of ordinary people can be relied upon, but once in being it introduces a political factor which has never existed here before. Somewhere near a million British working men now have rifles in their bedrooms and don't in the least wish to give them up. The possibilities contained in that fact hardly need pointing out.

I see that I have written a lot more than I intended. I began this letter

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on the 17th August, and I end it on the 25th. The Russians and the British have marched into Iran, and everyone is delighted. We have had a goodish summer and the people have got some sunlight in their bones to help them through the winter. London has not had a real air raid for nearly four months. Parts of the East End are simply flattened out, and the City is a mass of ruins with St. Paul's, almost untouched, standing out of it like an enormous rock, but the less-bombed parts of London have been so completely cleaned up that you would hardly know they had ever been damaged. Standing on the roof of this tall block of flats I live in and looking all round, I can see no bomb damage anywhere, except for a few churches whose spires have broken off in the middle, making them look like lizards that have lost their tails. There is no real food shortage, but the lack of concentrated foods (meat, bacon, cheese and eggs) causes serious underfeeding among heavy labourers, such as miners, who have to eat their midday meal away from home. There is a chronic scarcity of cigarettes and local shortages of beer. Some tobacconists consider that the amount of tobacco smoked has increased by 40 per cent since the war. Wages have not kept up with prices, but on the other hand there is no unemployment, so that though the individual wage is lower than it was, the family income tends to be higher. Clothes are fairly strictly rationed, but the crowds in the streets are not noticeably shabbier as yet. I often wonder how much we are all deteriorating under the influence of war—how much of a shock one would get if one could suddenly see the London of three years ago side by side with this one. But it is a gradual process and we do not notice any change. I can hardly imagine the London skies without the barrage balloons, and should be sorry to see them go.

Arthur Koestler, whose work is probably known to you, is a private in the Pioneers. Franz Borkenau, author of *Spanish Cockpit* and *The Communist International*, who was deported to Australia during the panic last year, is back in England. Louis MacNeice and William Empson are working for the BBC. Dylan Thomas is in the army. Arthur Calder-Marshall has been made an officer. Tom Wintringham is once again an instructor in the Home Guard, after resigning for a period. Meanwhile the Russians acknowledge seven hundred thousand casualties, and the armies are converging on Leningrad by the same roads as they followed twenty-two years ago. I never thought I should live to say "Good luck to Comrade Stalin," but so I do.

Yours ever,

GEORGE ORWELL

P.S. I must add a word about that appalling "message" to British writers from the Soviet novelist, Alexei Tolstoi, with the old atrocity stories dug up from 1914, which appeared in the September *Horizon*. That is the feature of war that frightens me, much worse than air raids. But I hope people in the USA won't imagine that people here take that kind of stuff seriously. Everyone I know laughs when they hear that old one about the Germans being chained to their machine guns.

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10 Propositions and 8 Errors

Philip Rahv

IN THEIR *10 Propositions on the War* (July-August issue) my fellow-editors Greenberg and Macdonald seem to me to have put themselves into a snug sectarian hole. Their dicta outline a position which I cannot adopt as my own because I regard it as morally absolutist and as politically representative of a kind of academic revolutionism which we should have learned to discard long ago. Despite the shattering surprises of the past two years, Greenberg and Macdonald are still sure they know all the answers. But the answers turn out to be nothing more than the same old orthodox recommendations. Again we read that the social revolution is around the corner and that imperialism is tottering on the edge of the abyss, and again we fail to recognize the world as we know it.

Speaking for no movement, no party, certainly not for the working class, nor even for any influential grouping of intellectuals, the authors of the *10 Propositions* nevertheless write as if they are backed up by masses of people and if what has been happening is daily confirming their prognosis. They refuse to see anything which does not fit into their apocalyptic vision of a single cleansing and overpowering event which will once and for all clear away the existing social system in Britain and in America, administer the *coup de grace* to the Hitler regime, and forthwith usher in socialism. A splendid program, to be sure, a program of maximum beneficence, but unfortunately its proponents fail to outline even the initial steps to its realization.

The fact is that by his swift conquests Hitler has removed one country after another from the area of possible revolutionary action. Thus the war has evolved in such a way as to exclude more and more the prospect of a socialist way out from the catastrophe. Now we have reached the stage where the war will either be won by the combined might of the Anglo-American imperialism and Stalin's Red Army, or else it won't be won at all; and the military defeat of Germany remains the indispensable pre-condition of any progressive action in the future. Such calculations naturally prove disappointing to Marxists accustomed to look forward to this war as the final act in the drama of the class-struggle. But reality has utterly belied this agreeable perspective.

The orthodox Marxists thought that the imperialists of both camps will exhaust themselves and then they will take over. However, things have turned out otherwise. The exhaustion of imperialist Poland did not lead to any "taking over" by the Left but to its immediate fall to the Nazis; and the combined exhaustion and betrayal of France produced identical results. There has been no stalemate; England has survived, but

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her continental allies have all suffered total defeat. Now Russia is next, and if Stalin fails to stem the invasion it won't be a Trotskyite but Hitler's Gauleiter who will be installed in the Kremlin.

Actually, Greenberg and Macdonald's ideas are just as Utopian as the ideas propagated in England by people like Harold Laski and Francis Williams, who appeal to the British capitalists to abdicate, to commit social and political suicide, so as to build up the morale of the anti-fascist peoples and give the war a "creative meaning." Laski and Williams look to the Churchill government to execute and supervise this "revolution by consent." Now one must really possess an ultra-metaphysical faith in the goodness of human nature to adopt such a program! For if anything can be learned from historical experience, it is surely this: that no ruling class hesitates to put its class interests above its national interests. The conduct in this war of the bourgeois strata in France is the perfect confirmation of this insight into class-behavior. There is no reason to doubt that if it were not for the promise of American aid the British conservatives would have long ago forced a negotiated peace with Hitler. American intervention is the only brand of "socialism" those people want and understand—it is Churchill's "socialism" and, I am afraid, Bevin's and Morrison's too. And at that, looking at it strictly from their point of view, it is by no means such a bad substitute.

No, declare the extremists, democratic capitalism will never do away with itself in order to speed the day of victory; hence it must be overthrown, and this is the only way to win the war. Well, all one can say in reply is that if this is true then the war is as good as lost. For consider this: since they concede—tactily at least—the futility of counting on an internal upheaval against the Hitler regime so long as the Nazi armies have not been defeated, they have perforce narrowed down their revolutionary expectations to the two democracies. But these are precisely the countries where the working class is least schooled in independent political traditions and where reformism is the sole norm of labor action. Economic conditions in America and the relations between the social classes being what they are, is it not sheer romanticism to believe that basic revolutionary changes are likely to occur here in the near future? And, remember, we are not speaking of a revolution anytime, sometime, but right now, not later, at any rate, than within the next two or three years, before the situation is irretrievably lost through a definitive Hitler victory.

Revolutions, however, are not made to facilitate a fight against a distant enemy—especially not when a good part of the population, as in this country, holds that this fight is none of their concern—but only when the masses are convinced that there is absolutely no other way out from the impasse in which they find themselves. Moreover, even such a conviction will in itself come to nothing unless the top-sections of society are at the same time thrown into a state of confusion and the armed forces

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guarding their interests have been successfully exposed to disintegrating propaganda. Plainly no such prerequisites exist, nor is there any real evidence that they are in process of formation, either in the United States or in Britain. And this being the case, the categorical "must" employed in the *10 Propositions* reduces itself to mere braggadocio.

Both the revolutionaries by class-war and the revolutionaries by "consent" approach situations abstractly, in terms of what is unconditionally desirable, not in terms of what can actually be accomplished within a given period. And in this connection I would like to quote the concluding sentences from Macdonald's review (September-October issue) of Francis Williams' book, *War by Revolution*. "Mr. Williams' book was published a year ago," Macdonald writes tauntingly. "India is still not free, the British government has moved steadily to the right, and, instead of the democratic manifesto he urges on Mr. Churchill, we have the famous Eight Points. To Mr. Williams must be addressed the question: how much longer can you continue to believe that Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt are on your team?" This is surely correct. By the same token, however, one can address a similar question to Macdonald. Since the war began, we must say to him, you have advocated the policies embodied in the *10 Propositions*. Now, after two years, can you cite a single political turn of any significance that substantiates your expectations? Is it not true that the labor movement here as in England, especially now that the Stalinists have returned to the fold, is more than ever committed to supporting the war-effort of Messrs. Churchill and Roosevelt? Politics is a game ruled by empirical considerations. If it is quite fair to subject Mr. Williams' notions to the test of reality, why not test your own in the same manner?

Today's War and Yesterday's Strategy

Greenberg and Macdonald's first two propositions declare that (1) "This war is 'different' from the last one" and (2) that "Fascism is less desirable than democratic capitalism." The Kaiser's victory, they contend, "would not have meant a *break* in our civilization. Hitler's would." Agreed. But the remaining eight propositions, which seem to me an amalgam of Leninist and Luxemburgian strategies of the last war literally applied to this one, tend to cancel out, if not altogether to refute, the first two. It appears that the opening gambit—"this war is different"—is a mere argumentative concession leading to no revision of policy. Take proposition No. 3: "The issue—not war but revolution." Even winning the war, they write, will not advance us "one step nearer the only real solution, which is to deflect the current of history from fascism to socialism. In the war or out of it, the United States faces only one future under capitalism: fascism." Here we have a series of bald assertions that wholly ignore the element of time, which is the one element one can least afford to overlook in political calculations. Greenberg and Macdonald forget that an issue becomes real only insofar as it takes hold of the mind of the

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masses; and since the issue of revolution has so far failed to take hold, shall we therefore say that the outcome of the war is a matter of indifference to us?

Moreover, it is wholly gratuitous to dismiss a bourgeois-democratic victory as meaningless. While in itself it will not bring socialism, it will, on the other hand, bring us quite a few steps nearer "the only real solution" by giving the labor movement an opportunity to take stock of itself, to re-group its forces, and, if so minded, to resume the struggle for a fundamental reconstruction of society. Hitlerism in collapse would most probably pull down with it the structure of fascism the world over, thus eliminating, for a time at least, the most effective instrument of class and national terror that modern imperialism has yet been able to devise. In short, whereas a Nazi victory would bury the revolution for good, the chances are that a Nazi defeat would recreate the conditions for progressive action. At all events, we no longer have any real alternative to supporting the democratic war-effort. Fascism is very strong; the accumulated betrayals of Stalinism have caused millions of people to lose their faith in the socialist program; and the Comintern and Social-Democratic experiences have eaten up entire generations of revolutionary leaders and activists. Under such circumstances if we can save anything substantial through piecemeal solutions we ought to count ourselves fortunate indeed.

As for the idea that by going into a shooting war this country would automatically turn fascist, that is one of those abysmal cliches that have done infinite harm to the anti-fascist cause. After all, it is not Roosevelt who now looms up as the potential Fuehrer but the isolationist Lindbergh; and it is not the various interventionist committees but the America First outfit which is today the leading the proto-fascist organization in the United States. Having lost its character of a provincial movement, rooted in the populist traditions of the farm-communities, isolationism has undergone a sea-change. It has been seized upon by the native fascists, who, emerging from the back-alleys of the political world, have finally discovered the true-blue "American" issue they have long been seeking. At last they have come in contact with wealth, power, and respectability; and if Hitler has his way in Europe they will have their way in America. This danger, however, is overlooked by the authors of the *10 Propositions*, who are compelled by the peculiar logic of their political line to see in the Roosevelt administration the mainstay of reaction.

Though formulated differently, with Luxemburgian interpolations, Greenberg and Macdonald's program reduces itself in practice to the Leninist policy of revolutionary defeatism. But the trouble is that our impetuous proposition-makers do not quite understand the conditions that gave Lenin's policy its political stamina and consistency. Lenin saw in the defeat of one's own country the chance for revolutionary action. In this he was correct, for the collapse of the Eastern front led to the February and October revolutions and, later, the collapse of the Central

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powers led to the abortive revolutions in Germany, Austria, and Hungary. Lenin's reasoning, however, was based on two premises: first, the approximate identity of the social system in all the belligerent states and, second, the expectation that the defeat of a country would not result in the loss of its national independence, in its being swallowed up by the victor. Only on the basis of these premises can one justify, from a Marxist point of view, the risks of a defeatist policy. The Versailles powers did not set up a puppet regime in Berlin; they exacted reparations and sliced off certain territories, but essentially they left the German people free to choose, and if necessary to fight, for whatever internal regime they preferred. At Brest-Litovsk the Kaiser's generals did not demand the complete surrender of Russian sovereignty; and the signing of that onerous treaty still left the Bolsheviks plenty of room for their Soviets. But today neither premise of Lenin's strategy holds good any longer. The defeat of Poland, Norway, France, etc., has brought about their total extinction as independent states —and obviously a proletarian revolution in the face of Gestapo rule and Nazi garrisons is unthinkable. The Kaiser fought for a re-partition of the world's colonies and natural resources, whereas Hitler is fighting to convert Europe itself into a colony. And a colonial status for Europe puts an end to all Marxist hopes.

The Chances of an Anglo-American Victory

But the crux of Greenberg and Macdonald's argument is that the Churchill and Roosevelt governments are incapable of organizing "an effective war-effort against fascism outside" and that, therefore, the actual choice is between socialism and Hitlerism. I venture to say that this prediction of an Anglo-American rout unless socialism comes to the rescue is not a little intermixed with wishful thinking. The fact is that Hitler is now further away from winning than he was a year ago, and American aid is beginning to flow in measurable quantities. It is true that the Nazis have at their disposal a wholly centralized and efficient economy, but this advantage is largely cancelled out by the indisputable American superiority in industrial plant and raw materials. There is every reason to believe that once America is fully drawn into the struggle its offensive power will astound the world. If we should stay out, however, the Nazi plans are likely to be fulfilled; and it is hard to grasp just how, under conditions of all-around ruin, any last-minute attempt to refurbish social and property relations in Britain or Russia can save either country from disaster. The victorious Nazi soldiers are immune to socialist propaganda; only when beaten down will they heed the voices of dissent.

Greenberg and Macdonald complain that in the Nazi-occupied countries "Churchill's propaganda arouses little response. . . Only a program which promises a real reorganization of society can inspire the peoples in the conquered countries to revolt, to take the risks involved in widespread and constant sabotage." This, mind you, was written just three months ago, but today, without the benefit of any socialist promises from

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Churchill or even the semblance of an ultimate program, all of occupied Europe is in a state of latent revolt. No sooner did the German setbacks in Russia become known than the conquered nations were swept by a wave of sabotage, arson, terrorism, and guerrilla warfare. Clearly, what the masses in the conquered countries find intolerable is precisely the Nazi occupation, and they do not need to be artificially provided by the British with reasons for hating their alien masters. Their suffering in the hands of the Nazis is a sufficient incitement to hatred and, should the opportunity come at last, to armed rebellion. But if these oppressed peoples finally regain their national independence, they will doubtless learn from their own experience that there is no road back to the pre-Hitler world—and one can expect that at this historical turning-point socialism will again become a concrete issue. This whole process, however, must be lived through: the consciousness of the masses knows of no short cuts.

The Bonanza of a "Peaceful" Revolution

To speak seriously of a revolution without taking into account the very real hazards of a civil war is the height of political frivolity. But it is exactly to such frivolity that Greenberg and Macdonald are driven when they actually go so far as to "promise," as it were, that a social revolution in England or America, if it comes at all during this war, "would probably be short and relatively peaceful." Nor would it "necessarily" open the gates to Hitler through a *belated* civil war, they claim. Not necessarily, to be sure, but it is quite likely that in case of a grave revolutionary threat the British rulers would know how to strike a bargain with Hitler at the expense of the rebels. At any rate, this is not a matter to be dismissed airily, by means of a frail historical analogy with the French Revolution, which ran its course under totally different circumstances. A ruthlessly logical revolutionary would openly accept the risk of a civil war and the consequent danger of "opening the gates" to the foreign enemy; but Greenberg and Macdonald want to have their cake and eat it too.

This blithely optimistic theory of a "short and relatively peaceful revolution" anticipates that the ruling class would be "so discredited by its military incapacity and so demoralized by its own mistakes as to be unable to offer serious resistance for some time to come." But this is pure speculation, and one cannot build a realistic policy on the basis of episodic contingencies. Do you want the British workers, then, to sabotage the war-effort of the Churchill government, thus exposing themselves to mortal danger, in order to prepare for a problematical situation that might never arise? Such a course of action might be worthwhile if there were little to choose between Hitlerism and the existing order in Britain; but this primary condition of a Leninist anti-war strategy is no longer available. A militarily decisive and demoralizing defeat for the British would most probably be followed by a successful invasion, and in such a

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crisis a zero-hour revolution in London would be a futile gesture of despair. Another variant: a change of government is possible in case Churchill bungles some extremely important campaign; the Labor Party might then be charged with exclusive responsibility for the conduct of the war, but this is a far cry from the classic Marxist uprising that our left-wing irreconcilables have in mind. As for the prospect of an American revolution in the near future, the logic of a sanguine outlook in this respect escapes me altogether.

The Fatal Lack

But throughout Greenberg and Macdonald assume that their program is in no sense invalidated by the absence of an organized movement to shape and lead such a revolution. Proposition No. 9 reads: "There exists today no organized leadership for such a revolutionary policy as we advocate. But, while this is a serious lack, it is not a fatal one. New organizational forms must and will be found." Now I am not in the least impressed by the categorical phrase, "must and will be found." During the past decade we have all encountered this rhetoric of confidence too often in Marxist brochures to mistake it for anything more than a ritualistic invocation, a kind of *leitmotiv* of History on the March. What is fatal, in my opinion, is precisely this lack of a revolutionary movement. (For in this article I am not arguing against a revolutionary policy in principle; I am arguing that in the absence of a revolutionary movement and also because certain other essential conditions are wanting such a policy is illusory.) The fascists are not going to withhold their blows until the leftists have finally discovered the "new organizational forms" and filled them with the proper political content. It's all very well to write: "Parties sometimes make history, but history also makes parties." Yes, but in our epoch history has undone before our very eyes quite a number of parties—the degeneration of the Comintern is one example and the breakup of the Fourth International into splinter groups is another. At bottom all that Greenberg and Macdonald are really saying is that if a revolutionary party existed it would not fail to act in a revolutionary manner. But that is a tautology, not an insight.

In Proposition No. 9 it is further assumed that the American workers are now ready to undertake a struggle for socialism and all that remains to be solved is the seemingly 'technical' problem of leadership. But the workers are by no means ready, nor is leadership by and large a 'technical' problem. It is closely related, rather, to our estimate of the political capacities of the workers as a class and to our whole conception of the tasks and functions of a revolutionary vanguard. Do Greenberg and Macdonald still believe in the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for instance, and do they still see in this class the kind of social instrument that the founders of Marxism saw in it. It is meaningless to say, as they do, that we want a "loose" party instead of a tight one on the Bolshevik model. Loose or tight, what are the working principles and organizational methods of this party?

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No, what has been lost in the past two decades through an uninterrupted series of blunders, betrayals, and defeats cannot so easily be regained. Oracular appeals to history and a mere show of will on the part of a few literary intransigents will avail us nothing. Life is running so low in the revolutionary movement that only a top to bottom transformation, on a world scale, of our entire moral and political environment can possibly bring about its recovery. In the meantime let us not lull ourselves with illusions about the war-aims of the bourgeois democracies on the one hand, or about the ability of the workers to fulfill the Marxist prophecies on the other. I am not suggesting that Greenberg and Macdonald and their political friends should rush to join the war-party. Doubtless they have other things to do. In a sense this war, even if it accomplishes the destruction of fascism, is not yet *our* war. But this fact in itself does not permit us to take for granted that the salvation of mankind has been entrusted to us and that we alone know how to achieve it.

REPLY BY GREENBERG AND MACDONALD

Without attempting to match rhetoric with our fellow editor, we want to make the following points.

1. *Distortions of our position:*

1. Rahv identifies our position with Lenin's revolutionary defeatism, and claims we view the outcome of the war with indifference. On the contrary, we emphasize our concern with beating Hitler and fascism; we present socialism as the means; and our "transitional demands" show concretely the first steps to be taken. If this is "Leninism," Lenin never heard about it. The propositions trace their paternity rather to Rosa Luxemburg's "revolutionary defensism."

2. It is not true that we claim that "the social revolution is around the corner," or that we expect Churchill to be overthrown by "a classic Marxist uprising" (which Rahv apparently misconceives as a sudden, violent putsch rather than a social process). There is no evidence for either statement in the propositions. We agree with Orwell that there was a "revolutionary situation" in England after Dunkirk, and we can imagine this happening again. While we hold no fixed conceptions as to how the revolution is to be effected, we are certain that it will not be done by supporting Roosevelt-Churchill.

3. Rahv charges we "assume" the American workingclass is ready to fight for socialism today and that only the problem of leadership has to be solved. We stated that the *objective* factors for socialism have matured, not that the American masses are now *subjectively* in a revolutionary mood. We "assumed" only that the solution of the problem of leadership would itself have an effect on the total revolutionary process—and also depend on its development.

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2. *Rebuttals:*

1. Rahv asks if we can "cite a single political turn" since the war began that supports our interpretation. We can cite the following: (a) the low army and civilian morale in this country; (b) the poor showing to date of British and American war production; (c) Churchill's inability to take advantage of Hitler's involvement in Russia; (d) the persistence of widespread strikes in "defense" industries; (e) the inability of Roosevelt-Churchill to put forth any war aims that are either politically meaningful or propagandistically effective; (f) above all, the fact that the only army able to cope with the Reichswehr so far in morale, equipment and strategy is the Red Army, product of a society that, whatever it is, certainly is not bourgeois-democratic. (We can't help noting that the basic defect of Rahv's approach to the war is its naive idealism and romantic optimism. He apparently takes seriously Roosevelt's fireside chats.)

2. Rahv writes that the British ruling class would make a deal with Hitler if revolution threatened. But if there was a revolutionary situation —and we neither expect nor advocate revolutionary action *without* such a situation, Rahv to the contrary notwithstanding—then an attempt to make peace with Hitler would simply precipitate the overthrow of the rulers and enormously speed up the revolutionary process.

3. We concede that we underestimated the strength of anti-Nazi feeling on the continent and that "without the benefit of any socialist promises from Churchill . . . all of occupied Europe is in a state of latent revolt." (Rahv forgets he has written earlier that "by his swift conquests Hitler has removed one country after another from the area of possible revolutionary action"—a typical exaggeration of Hitler's strength and underestimation of the masses, which he himself here contradicts.) But these very events strikingly confirm our *general* analysis. (1) We claimed that Churchill could neither lead nor exploit the continent's deep hatred of the Nazis, and these recent acts of violence have remained sporadic and historically sterile precisely because they lack *political* leadership. (2) Don't these outbursts, above all, show that the European workingclass is *not* the corpse Rahv thinks it is, that revolution is still a factor with which Hitler's "New Order" must reckon?

4. Rahv asks us if we still see the workingclass as the social force Marx and Engels did. We believe the workers must take the lead in any revolutionary social change, and that their class interests express the general interests of society more fully than do those of any other existing class.

3. *And what about Rahv's own position?*

1. "Greenberg and Macdonald forget that an issue becomes real only insofar as it takes hold of the minds of the masses." But it is precisely the job of politically-minded writers, including Rahv, to see things a bit *ahead* of the masses, not merely to follow along after events. Rahv seems to

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ignore the factor of *change* in history; he simply projects the present balance of forces into the future.

2. In line with the above, Rahv assumes that the forces arrayed against Hitler at present assure us within a reasonable amount of time a neat, orderly military victory over Hitler, and that such a victory will be a solution. We think a military victory can be achieved by the Allies only as the result of profound changes in their present social structure, and that these changes will add up to either fascism or socialism. It's quite likely that Rahv will refuse his victory by the time it's ready to be presented to him, that he will then be clamoring for unconditional support of a status quo threatened by an even greater evil than Hitler.

3. Rahv's approach to history is that of the home-owning commuter. He makes great play with such terms as "pure speculation," "episodic contingencies," and "problematical situations"; he wants his revolution covered by 5% gold bonds and insured at Lloyds against failure. But *any* policy that looks to the future—Lenin's in 1910, Hitler's in 1925—instead of merely paraphrasing, as Rahv's does, the status quo, must "speculate" on "contingencies," and *all* future situations are "problematical." Social change is always a gamble.

4. Rahv is extremely vague about his own concrete program—which is, of course, of considerable polemical advantage to him, since he can measure the weaknesses of our program against an ideal program instead of an actual one. In politics, no program but has defects and faces obstacles. The question must always be: what is the best policy *relative to other possible policies* to achieve the end in view? Rahv seems to agree, by implication rather than direct statement, with our end, namely, socialism. His program for getting there—also merely hinted at here and there—seems to be prostration before the status quo on this side of the battle line. He rejects *both* the revolutionary and the reformist programs for moving in the direction of socialism, and argues for concentrating entirely on winning the war, after which the masses "if so minded" will have that famous "breathing-spell" in which to resume the struggle for "a fundamental reconstruction of society." (We think the pace of social change is too fast for any such breathing-spell to materialize; and even if it should, Rahv's war policy seems to insure that the masses will *not* then be "so minded.") All this would indicate that Rahv is for this war and for unconditional support of Roosevelt-Churchill in it. But in his penultimate sentence he remarks that this war "in a sense . . . is not yet *our* war." In what sense? "Not yet"—then when? *Whose* war, then?

What exactly is our co-editor's position? It is a position for which he refuses to take any moral or intellectual responsibility. He knows only too well upon what he is relying to protect us from Hitler. He realizes the emptiness, the shabby hypocrisy of the present British and American war aims. Like Macbeth, he would like to profit by the crime without committing it.

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Books

VENUSBERG TO NUREMBERG

METAPOLITICS: FROM THE ROMANTICS TO HITLER. By Peter Viereck. Alfred A. Knopf. 335 *pages.* $3.00.

This is an attempt to present the sources and the development of Nazi ideology. The material is here for an important book, but this happens to be an exasperatingly superficial and misleading one. Its impact should have been that of something fresh and provoking, opening up new perspectives to our understanding of the recent past and the present. Unfortunately, the author's analytical equipment seems to consist only of an assortment of the easy and too simple terms current in conventional anti-Nazi journalism and of some of the more threadbare notions of Harvard Humanism. The banality of Mr. Viereck's point of view would have been less evident if only he had not tried to provide a critique as well as a description of Nazi ideology. For his book does have a certain value as information. Too little is known of Richard Wagner's role as a prophet of reactionary politics; most English-speaking readers have never even heard of Father Jahn, the gymnastics teacher and firebrand of the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon, or of Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn, the "Rembrandt German." To as many it will come as a surprise to learn that the ideas of the Nazis, in more or less their present form, were current among German petty bourgeois intellectuals long before 1914, much less 1933.

Metapolitics was a term suggested to Wagner: German politics were to be to ordinary politics as metaphysics to physics. Mr. Viereck finds Wagner the chief source of Hitler's ideas, with Alfred Rosenberg today giving them their most extreme and authoritative expression. To these two men, along with Father Jahn, the greatest part of the book is devoted. They and their ideas are bracketed under "romanticism," which was among other things "a cultural and political reaction against the Roman-French-Mediterranean spirit of clarity, rationalism, form and universal standards. . . . Thereby romanticism is really the nineteenth century's version of the perennial German revolt against the western heritage." Romanticism with its passion, its impatience of restraint and its urge to expand and absorb was according to the author the hearth in which Nazism was ignited, and Nazism is its culmination.

German "romanticism," the author goes on, has operated upon "three sweeping assumptions of dubious logic." The first, the "mathematical fallacy," asserts a whole to be greater than the sum of its parts. The second is that of "repetition," i.e. a proposition as to value is supported by repetitious affirmation, not by reasoning: "Why life for life's sake? Always the same answer: because it is life. Nothing is being said except

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that life is life, nation is nation, ego is ego, x equals x. These modest truths have restated, not answered the question of value judgment." The "third" assumption is that of "false analogy": because change and evolution govern nature, that which in the world of human affairs changes and evolves is eminently good; the static and permanent is bad, whether it happens to be an elemental organism, a species, a people, a law or a value. From these three "assumptions" comes most of the evil. One is to infer that they made German fascism almost inevitable.

The abstraction of the "assumptions" must have required a good deal of intellectual labor; nevertheless, they are gross over-simplifications. Of the three assumptions, the first—the "mathematical fallacy," or "organic assumption"—is the only one to have actually been employed by the Romantics as an *assumption*. And it is not a fallacy. Does or does not any living organism amount to something greater than the sum of its parts? And is it true or not that a new quality becomes manifest when people group themselves together, not present before in their mere aggregate as individuals? The second assumption is a fiction. The German Romantics did try to answer the question of value judgment. Life, said Schelling, was valuable because it was the Divine working itself out. For Fichte the nation was valuable because among other things it guaranteed the rights of the individual and reconciled conflicting interests. And so on. As for the assumption of "dynamic analogy"—the high value the Romantics set upon change and evolution was not an assumed truth from which they reasoned, but something which they tried to justify; it was also a taste, a temper, a response to a period of transition, or in the case of some a reaction to the triumph of "safe" middle-class standards. It was the state in which those who are radically dissatisfied with the existing order automatically find themselves.

Mr. Viereck seems too unsophisticated historically to realize that in tracing the sources of the Romantic "error" to these "assumptions," he is actually attacking 19th century naturalism with all its radical philosophic and political connotations. And so his book, when it is critical, tends to become a kind of vulgar *anti-moderne* polemic. Whether he knows it or not, the errors of which he finds Romanticism guilty are only *errors* according to an assumed Christian orthodoxy.

The term "romanticism," in the lower case, is an over-simplification. As Mr. Viereck uses it, it implies something that persists beyond historical limitations, a permanent category of human behavior, i.e. "romanticism" is the way human nature shows in general its impatience with reason, tradition and external norms. But it is something that can be refuted: "Time and again romanticism has been correctly refuted, but it always survives its refuters." At the same time, "Civilization's task is not a question of destroying but of harnessing the eternal romantic element." It is painful to see Professor Babbitt's fatuities resurrected to confuse further the already sufficiently confused opponents of Hitler. In repudiating the

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"French-Roman-Mediterranean spirit of rationalism, clarity and form," German Romanticism did not repudiate all rationalism, all clarity and all form in general. Romanticism as a whole, including its German version, was the expression of a revolt against a *particular* rationalism, a *particular* clarity and a *particular* sense of form. It was the negation heralding a new social order pregnant with its own rationalism, clarity and form. (And the "perennial German revolt against the West" was in this case as in every other a revolt against a comity of which the Germans as a national and cultural whole were the victims instead of the beneficiaries.)

It is indisputable that Romanticism is the most important single source of Nazi doctrine. But there was nothing in Romanticism that made this doctrine inevitable, nothing that made Romanticism *responsible* for it, try as Mr. Viereck may to show the contrary by means of his "assumptions." What then is the filial relationship of Nazism to Romanticism? Any one who tries to answer this question must take into account the inextricable and ambiguous connections that exist between ideas and the milieux in which and the material circumstances under whose pressure they arose. Mr. Viereck treats ideas as the determinants of history; therefore he can *blame* Romanticism for Hitler, and pure Evil for Romanticism, and he can scold them both with that self-righteousness possible only to academists and journalists. Only they can find it so easy to shut out the uncontrollable complexity of that which actually happens. Only academists can "refute" Romanticism, and only journalists Hitler, so conclusively. But they cannot explain either; and certainly they cannot arm us against the latter.

Metapolitics does indeed touch upon some of the historical events that share the responsibility for Nazi ideas, but the author treats them on the level of a high school textbook, at their most obvious, and neglects entirely the very fundamental connection between proto-Nazi ideas and the late and hurried development of Germany as an industrial power. Fichte, for example, was a German super-nationalist, but he was not a proto-Nazi. Paul de Lagarde, who appears fifty years later, was. There is a great difference. Why?

But perhaps I am misrepresenting the nature of this book by emphasizing its tendency rather than its substance, and what is left out rather than what is put in. A good half and more is taken up by an account, valuable for its information, of the activities and the ideas of Jahn, Wagner, Rosenberg and others. Mr. Viereck remarks the fact that so many Nazi leaders are intellectuals and artists *manqués*, and correctly makes this responsible for the particular flavor and décor of Hitler's movement, and for that extraordinarily bitter resentment of the surface phenomena of capitalist society which could only have come from frustration—a feeling, Mr. Viereck should have pointed out, peculiar today to the petty bourgeoisie. But it is typical of the book that it should have failed to have hinted even at such things as that; and typical too of Mr. Viereck's

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weakness for the flashy and vulgar simplifications of journalism that he should call the Nazis "Greenwich Village politicians." The bohemia of putsches and freebootery in which the Nazis learned their politics was no artist's quarter, in spite of the fact that its plots were hatched in cafes.

There are other things that make this book suspect. Thomas Mann is found to be one of Germany's "most courageous . . . thinkers." (Mann did not break publicly with Hitler until two or three years after the Nazis took power.) In referring to the writers there who have more or less assented to Hitler, such entities as Fallada, Paul Ernst, Binding, Carossa, Kolbenheyer and Hesse are called "distinctly major figures." If they are, then Thornton Wilder, the Benêts, John Marquand and Robinson Jeffers are major figures in American writing. It is somehow characteristic that Gottfried Benn, actually the most important German poet after Hauptmann to come to terms with the Nazis, is not mentioned.

CLEMENT GREENBERG

THE DISCUSSION WAS LIVELY

THE INTENT OF THE CRITIC. By Edmund Wilson, Norman Foerster, John Crowe Ransom, W. H. Auden. Edited, with an introduction, by Donald A. Stauffer. Princeton University Press. $2.50.

This book is made up of lectures on criticism delivered serially at Princeton, and it is better than such books usually are. Four important critical positions are defended by four resourceful critics in papers which on the whole are freshly conceived. Only Mr. Foerster's lecture on Neo-Humanism has the taste of a warmed-over dish.

The principal disagreement occurs in connection not with methods of criticism but with the question of its function in the community; and from this point of view the alignments are curious. Auden, the modernist poet, and Foerster, the academic conservative, both conceive the Good Critic as a sort of cultural hero. To Auden, preoccupied as always with the teacher-student relationship, the Critic is a Promethean tutor, an individual who protects the liberties of the masses by broadcasting knowledge; whereas Mr. Foerster's Critic is more of a sage, concerned with keeping alive the quintessential wisdom of the ages. Both views clearly derive from a 19th century prepossession according to which the man of letters substitutes for the priest in the non-religious modern world. Indeed the priest is still in the background in Foerster's plan: you can have him if you want him: Mr. Foerster as man of letters will abdicate at any minute. But apart from having a common origin, Auden's and Foerster's programs differ profoundly. Towards science and the systematic use of the intellect in general, Auden is warmly receptive where Foerster is at best suspicious. If the neo-humanist has any advantage over the poet it is in the formal coherence of his views: Foerster works in a tradition, or at any rate a subtradition. But Auden's declarations have a loudly improvised and emer-

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gency air; nor does his stylized, sybilline manner of presentation clear up the waters in which anthropology, social democracy and Original Sin are thrashing around as in Original Chaos. Does he too want to be a national librarian!

With Ransom and Wilson we leave the general critic for the critic who is only a literary specialist. Indeed neither of these writers even considers the distinction; both seem to assume that methodology alone is the issue in any discussion of criticism. Wilson thus writes of the historical method and its uses, and demonstrates the method by giving a short history of it. Then he shows how ideologies such as that derived from Freud may be made to work together with the historical principle; and finally he shows how, by reference to that principle, literature may be not only analyzed but evaluated. The tentativeness of this final discussion suggests Wilson's weakness on the philosophical side—which is not to say that he is not sounder in this respect than his fellow-lecturers. But the primary limitation comes out, I think, in connection with the problem of giving historical criticism a literary concreteness; that is of relating it to the specifically structural, or "aesthetic," properties of writing. And this is where Ransom, with his program of intensive structural analysis, comes in. Wilson year by year keeps bringing more and more ideology to bear on the interpretation of the content of literature; whereas Ransom keeps mulling over, as in this elaborate essay, the implications of the internal or, as he calls it, "textural" approach. But from the point of view of "ideal" criticism, this method, as Mr. Ransom practises and defines it, has its limitations too. It works to atomize literature, reducing it to a collection of fragments, an anthology of lyric poems. And perhaps it is only by reference to the historical situation in which literary works are produced that you *can* interpret them as wholes. F. W. DUPEE

Shorts

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS; an English version. By Robert Fitzgerald. Harcourt, Brace and Co. $1.50.

A distinguished translation of this most extraordinary of Greek dramas would be welcome at any time and seems particularly appropriate to the present. *Oedipus at Colonus*, the greatest of all "refugee-pieces," ranks with *King Lear* as a supreme expression of the horror and pathos of old age. Even more absorbing perhaps are the new fields of psychology and abstract poetical structure which the talents of Sophocles began to unearth at the age of 89.

We concede in advance that no translation will ever reproduce the strong structural intricacies that only the Greek language seems able to sustain. We only hope for some English verse that will suggest a little of the toughness and dignity of the original. Fitzgerald goes to the opposite

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extreme and transposes it into something colloquial and "modern," with an occasional interpolation of Elizabethan epithets. Sophocles may thus perhaps be made appropriate for high school tableaux, but his quality becomes speedily obliterated.

The Oedipus sequel depicts the banished king still expiating the sins which fate had wished upon him. He wanders ragged, blind and hideous into distant countries. When the final agonies overtake him he faces them all imperiously. This play, which I believe was chronologically the last of the great Greek dramas, is imbued with a character that sets it apart from the others. The "choral dialogues" (particularly the last, set against a background of lightning and thunder) although they whip the emotion up to a terrible pitch, are used more purely as structural pivots than anywhere previously. It is in such passages that Fitzgerald's verse seems most palpably thin and tasteless. (His rendering of "eptexa thumon" into "my guts shrink" will prove a sorry snare for the student who takes the *Commentary's* assurance literally, that this translation "could be used without unusual peril as a trot.")

A further characteristic of the original is the unending hiss and crackle that runs through almost every speech of Oedipus, except when he is consoling Antigone; the translator gives us nothing of this, nor of the more internal subtleties. "As for my mother,—damn you, you have no decency" is not far from the Maxwell Anderson which he tells us in his *Commentary* is no style for Sophocles. The more straight-forward passages such as those that begin and end the play are the most congenial to him.

In conclusion may I urge the friends of Greek drama to devise appropriate punishments for translators who turn "O Zeu" into "Ah God!" A stiff sentence would await Fitzgerald. G.L.K.M.

THE RED DECADE. By Eugene Lyons. Bobbs-Merrill. $3.00

With times changing so fast, and memories so short, it is a fine thing that Eugene Lyons has made a permanent record of names and dates. Here, given a form that cannot so easily be dropped into furtive and kindly wastebaskets, are the lists of Stalin's piebald fronts in the United States, with sponsors, signers, executive boards, leading spokesmen and members. Here is chronicled their birth under the eyes and forceps of the Kremlin accoucheurs, their lives and loves, and their so very humiliating deaths. There is no squeamish reserve taking refuge in abstractions or vagueness: the names are named. So far as I can check, the account is accurate, and, though frankly journalistic, inclined toward understatement.

The Red Decade is best in handling the "cultural" and middle-class organizations—the League for Peace and Democracy (*née* against War and Fascism), Friends of the Soviet Union, Anti-Nazi League, League of American Writers, TAC, and so on. It is admittedly sketchy about Stalinist operations in the unions, so much so that Lyons might have been well

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advised to leave them out altogether. In fact, a narrower concentration on the cultural salient, with even most of the historical background material omitted, would have given the book a sharper thrust and would have allowed also a more complete coverage within the more restricted field.

It would be pleasant to hope that some of those whose names are now decorating the new Stalin letterheads, or will tomorrow, might learn from *The Red Decade*. Experience seems to show that they will not, that knowledge here is won, if at all, only through something of more direct personal impact than argument and evidence. The disease is too deep for merely verbal treatment. What Lyons is in truth writing about, this ludicrous and horrible suicide of a whole intellectual generation, is not the vagary of individuals, but a phase in the death of a culture.

JAMES BURNHAM

WHOSE REVOLUTION? A STUDY OF THE FUTURE COURSE OF LIBERALISM IN THE UNITED STATES. By Roger Baldwin, Alfred Bingham, James Burnham, John Chamberlain, Lewis Corey, Malcolm Cowley, Granville Hicks, Hans Kohn, Eugene Lyons, Bertram D. Wolfe. Edited by Irving DeWitt Talmadge. Hoswell, Soskin. 296 *pp.* $2.50.

It is impossible to do justice to this volume in a single review. I have therefore written three, as follows:

(1) What, no Horace M. Kallen?

(2) The characters are unreal and self-contradictory, the plot confused, there is too much talk, not enough action, and practically no suspense.

(3) This is where I came in six years ago. But the cast looks different.

D.M.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LITERARY FORM—STUDIES IN SYMBOLIC ACTION. By Kenneth Burke. Louisiana State University Press. 455 *pages.* $3.00.

Kenneth Burke's critical writings stimulate, provoke and unsettle me —at least while I actually read them—but they leave too little impression. A short time after putting Burke down, I shall have lost sight of exactly what it was that caused the excitement. My memory is no better nor worse than average, so I feel the fault must be his. Is it not because Burke fails to deal enough with the work of literature, the object itself, and deals instead with the modes, not of apprehending it, but of thinking about it? (Has he given us many really fresh insights into literature? Even his analysis of "The Ancient Mariner" seems to me a restatement in Freudian terms of so much already well recognized in the poem.) And is it not that, instead of discussing the processes by which we think about works of literature, he discusses the terminology of these processes? I believe that what Burke really does—and this is what excites us while we read—is make articulate the more or less unconscious assumptions we generally

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act upon in producing and experiencing literature. He does not criticize these assumptions or relate them in any new way to the rest of experience. He seems to be doing this, but actually he is only wording or re-wording them with a great amount of ingenuity. (Does the statement that every document, literary and non-literary, is "a strategy for encompassing a situation" say anything really new? Does it furnish a new aid to our understanding of literature? Haven't critics always treated works of art as "strategies" more or less, whether they realized it or not?) Burke's brilliance is in the originality with which he associates and combines new terms with old concepts. It is all superstructural. He does not devise new concepts for new aspects of experience nor arrive at new insights which require new terms. We hear him out, are grateful for the illumination, yet go on as before. The illumination has no heat.

However, I wish to make clear that I am not dismissing all of Burke's critical writing in this fashion. I am complaining only that too much of it does amount simply to terminological intrigue conducted within the standing body of truths and errors. Yet we have reasons to expect better things of Burke. He has moments of real insight, frequent enough to be counted a gift; and every once in a while he produces little items of perception for which we cannot be grateful enough. And if he does not conduct us along new paths of investigation, he at least sends us off on them.

But then there is his prose: he has a weakness for that awful pseudo-scientific jargon that has become familiar to us from the activities of progressive educators, psychologists and efficiency experts. Burke at times seems to have a faith in control by labels that approaches a magician's.

C. G.

THE GROUND WE STAND ON. By John Dos Passos. Harcourt, Brace. 420 *pp.* $3.50.

These biographical sketches of Sam Adams, Roger Williams, Franklin, and other libertarian figures from our history may be considered (1) as literature, (2) as propaganda.

(1) The blurb is accurate in claiming the book "reads like a fast-paced chronicle of contemporary events and characters." The pace is often so fast as to be merely cheap, as: "The next day the people of Paris rushed the Bastille. The King took fright and decided he'd be a good boy." Or: ". . . when Pontius Pilate passed the buck to the High Priest." Or melodramatic, as this on Robespierre: "He terrified and fascinated the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety like a snake in a rabbit hutch." I could also do without Dos Passos' literary trademark, the portmanteau word: "selfreliance," "hangeron," "massmood," "riversystem," "Englishspeaking," "landhunger," "oneroom," "hopedfor," and, one it took me some time to penetrate, "bishoprun." On the other hand, the book is readable, it turns over much interesting detail on some interesting periods, and it really does stimulate one's appetite to know more about the field, which is perhaps the most important literary merit for a book of this kind.

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(2) Dos Passos wrote it quite consciously as a Tract for the Times, and here it seems to me entirely a failure. He seems to think the libertarian tradition of these 17th and 18th century rebels has come down to the present essentially intact, and that the post-Civil War America of Rockefeller, Mellon and U. S. Steel stands on the ground of Sam Adams. He scolds the Marxist sceptics who deny the historical continuity of this tradition, and he has come to think that "in contrast to the agony of Europe . . . our poor old provincial American order" is "standing up pretty well." Thus Dos Passos, personally as honest and courageous a liberal as still remains in this grim age—witness his sticking his neck out to defend the indicted Minneapolis Trotskyists—turns his back on his post-war rebelliousness and becomes "responsible." It is an intellectual, not a moral, failure, whose root Dos Passos himself uncovers when he writes here, "Americans as a people notably lack a sense of history." This lack makes his book ineffective propaganda, since his thesis of continuity is too blatantly in conflict with the observable facts. It also makes Dos Passos a tame and misleading chronicler. His bourgeois revolutionists behave like so many paid-up members of the American Civil Liberties Union. Their struggles take place not in a context of bloodshed and class war and money and trade, but on a high idealistic plane of abstract "principle." Such an approach produces tableaux, not history. D.M.

Letters

IN DEFENSE OF BARZUN

Sirs:

It is interesting to note that Mr. White in reviewing Mr. Barzun's book fell into the same error as that into which fell the followers of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner according to Mr. Barzun, i.e. misinterpreting the author. After reading Mr. White's review we are forced to wonder whether Mr. Barzun has fallen into the error of Darwin, Marx, and Wagner, i.e. of having through faulty emphasis confused the reader. For it is obvious that Mr. White has been confused. Mr. White states that Barzun "tries to cast doubt upon the truth or beauty of what they [Darwin, Marx, Wagner] created." This is not what Barzun is trying to do. He does not deny the truth or beauty of their works, he denies the truth and beauty of their followers' distortions. His book is a critique of a heritage and a heritage is which passes from heir to heir. The criticism is levelled at the heritage as it passes into our hands, not as it left theirs eighty years ago. Barzun questions their value as teachers, not their value as creators. On reading Mr. White's review we are therefore led to question Barzun's value as a teacher. We do not question it very seriously however for we hardly think that many of Mr. Barzun's readers will prove as elaborately obtuse as Mr. White.

MARY AND ARTHUR SHIPMAN
HARTFORD, CONN.

OUR DRAFTEE DEFENDED

Sirs:

Laura Wood's letter, in your September-October issue, struck me as being decidedly superficial. She criticizes your draftee correspondent for his anti-social sentiments—not realizing that a sincere belief in the necessity of socialism may go hand-in-hand with a positive distaste for some of the warped examples of humanity that live under the present system. . . . Outside of a few naifs, the only people one can possibly like in modern society are the heroes—i.e., the exceptions to the rule.

From what I have heard of the draftees in general, there are very few of them who can be rated as heroic exceptions.

Sincerely,
GILBERT GARNETT

P.S. More Victor Serge, please. He's splendid.
NEW YORK CITY

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DECISION AND "FREE CULTURE"

We sent the letter below to Klaus Mann editor of "Decision," asking if he wished to make a reply. He wrote back: "It was very kind of you to let me see the poignant statement of Professor Etiemble. I do not wish to comment." We don't think any comment on the episode is necessary, either.—THE EDITORS.

Sirs:

In its No. 6 issue, *Decision* published (under the title: "The City of Man—Pro and Con") a group of commentaries on the book in question. In his reply to my criticism, Mr. G. A. Borgese accused me of not having read the book I wrote about and of yielding to French chauvinism. The uninitiated reader would, of course, believe Mr. Borgese, for everybody knows him at least by name. Those among the readers of *Decision* who also read PARTISAN REVIEW should know that Mr. Borgese's two chief points could not have been made if Mr. Klaus Mann, the editor of *Decision*, had condescended to publish my commentary as it was written. He deleted the paragraph which indicated my repugnance to all forms of nationalism, and he deleted all my parenthetical page references to the book.

Since Mr. Mann has refused to make amends by restoring the text of my article, I am forced to conclude that he has acted in this matter quite deliberately, and that "free culture," to the editors of *Decision*, is closer to the solidarity of a family, or of a tribe, than to what a simple professor like myself has always understood the words to mean. These are methods I would expect in Hitlerian Europe. Cordially yours,

CHICAGO, ILL. ETIEMBLE

P.R.'s LITERARY PRINCIPLES

Sirs:

I have read with much enjoyment, and slight irritation, the recent numbers of PARTISAN REVIEW. It is almost wasting typewriting, and is not very much praise, to say that P.R. is better than anything we have in England now. My irritation springs from what I find is a gap between the creative and political-theoretical sides of the paper: a gap which is perhaps inevitable, but which I have never seen recognized.

Briefly: your editorial attitude is (bating the rigidities of dialectical materialism—ignoring the S.W.P. controversies which don't immediately concern this letter) Marxist; your reply to Spender in the September-October 1940 issue is an admirable illustration of the differences between the radical liberal petty-bourgeois and the revolutionary attitude: but much of the matter which appears on the creative side of PARTISAN REVIEW is by implication anti-Marxist. I do not wish to seem to insist that you should print "Marxist" or "proletarian" literature. It is not so simple as that. But surely the merits of "East Coker" are from your point of view incidental, secondary? Surely the poem as a whole is to be regarded as reactionary, and Eliot as a self-confessed reactionary writer? And Eliot is an outstanding example merely.

I don't wish to seem captious—I am not trying to bait you: but I have never been able to discover any principle, other than a sharp empirical apolitical intelligence, at work in the selection of the creative writings which appear in PARTISAN REVIEW. I have myself much respect for that empirical intelligence, but do not suppose that *you* regard it as an ideal instrument of selection. It may be that you regard PARTISAN REVIEW as conditioned, upon the creative side, by the present state of society—that you shrug your shoulders and say, "Eliot, Tate,—they are reactionary thinkers, but they are the best poets we have." That would be comprehensible, though, to me, unsatisfactory. But I believe that some of your other readers would agree that a statement of editorial attitude, with regard to the relation between your political views and the creative work you publish, would be useful.

If this *does* seem captious, put it down to London bombing. This isn't the best place for thinking—though one gets used to bombs. I've lived in London since the beginning of the war and I've never seen a case of hysteria, or even real fright, yet. . . . All good wishes.

LONDON, ENGLAND JULIAN SYMONS

—Mr. Symons' question has always been a hard one for us to answer. We have printed the work of writers like T. S. Eliot because it has often seemed to us better, more serious and profound, than

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that of creative writers on our side of the political fence, and we have always felt that literary values must come first in judging literature. Recent events, notably Van Wyck Brooks' remarks on "coterie" writing, seem to show that Mr. Eliot's instinct was right in sending his poems to us, and that our was right in publishing them. For as Macdonald's article in this issue points out, the tide of reaction is running so strongly nowadays that writers like Eliot have "come to represent again relatively the same threat to official society as they did in the early decades of the century." It is coming to be something of a revolutionary act simply to print serious creative writing.—EDITORS

ADD: "FRENCH WRITERS, 1941"

Sirs:

In the latest issue I learned some valuable facts from Victor Serge's catalogue of French writers. I can add a footnote to what he says of some of the men. Gide is not in Cannes but rather Cagnes or Vence. Léon Pierre-Quint is in Marseille, eager to get here. And Jean Malaquais is also in Marseille; he was all fixed to get here, but then his sponsors pulled out when the new law went into effect. About these three I know directly.

Rodgers' poems are very evocative, the best things I have seen from Ireland in a long time. And Paul Goodman's story is good enough to make me wish it were thoroughly satisfactory.

NEW YORK CITY JUSTIN O'BRIEN

KING LOG VS. KING STORK

Sirs:

If I am not too late, I would like to make a point about the "10 Propositions on the War."

My own political sentiment is that, although the Big Business whose hand you say the President eats out of is indeed a hindrance to the defeat of Hitler, nevertheless those who work to bring in Socialism work to replace King Log with King Stork. But what I wish to point out here is the Discrepancy with a Big D in the reasoning of Messrs. Greenberg and Macdonald. Their trouble is that they are not advocating anything that is already in existence, and I suppose that such a predicament will always lend a touch of unreality to an argument.

Only the working class can defeat Hitler, they declare, and then go on to blame the Administration for settling the Allis-Chalmers strike with bayonets! Surely the inconsistency glares. Were the idle workmen really striking terror to the heart of the Wehrmacht? Was the Administration really comforting Hitler when it caused the production of Bombers for Britain to be resumed?

When we came to the Eight Points, that is another thing. It looks suspiciously as if their realization would bring about something like the Restoration of the Bourbons. And yet, the Congress of Vienna did not entirely bungle its job; after all, what followed was exactly one century without a general European war.

Meanwhile, congratulations to the PARTISAN REVIEW for taking life seriously and treating it with gusto. Depend on me to renew my subscription when the time comes, provided the Administration still allows it to publish—as I expect it will.

Yours faithfully,

NEW HAVEN, CONN. ROBERT DANIEL

ADD ANTI-WILLIAMS

Sirs:

What criterion obtains when you accept and publish the work of the late Dr. Williams? His "An Exultation" would almost justify Plato's argument against the poets. . . . What is the sequitur when Dr. Williams rightly approves the destruction of the East End slums and then goes on to approve the demolition of irreplaceable historic and architecturally brilliant buildings? His "never to be replaced," in its context, seems quite unambiguous, and one is forced to credit Dr. Williams with an attitude too alien to the temper of his readers to affect them as he, in the rôle of poet, surely intended. Or is Dr. Williams, after all, God to whom, conceivably, a personal affront (via his Grandmother, were God to own a Grandmother, and why not) would unleash the very heavens and rain tar and feathers over all the hateful little world.

Dr. Williams is no psychiatrist, nor is he gifted with much accurate self-examining power. The "poem" has this to be said for it: it is a happy instance of a-morality in verses. But some bias, usually moral, is necessary to communication.

I am very sorry that Grandmother was hurt.

Sincerely yours,

BOSTON, MASS. HOWARD BLAKE

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EMERGENCY APPEAL!

The most sweeping attack upon civil liberties and labor's rights in many years is the Federal indictment in Minnesota of 29 people—members of the Socialist Workers Party and the leaders of Motor Transport and Allied Workers Industrial Union, Local 544—CIO.

The prosecution has been vigorously condemned by the CIO, Labor's Non-Partisan League, the United Auto Workers, the American Civil Liberties Union, the *Nation,* the *New Republic* and other leading labor and liberal spokesmen.

The Civil Rights Defense Committee, which is directing the general defense in this case, has already, together with the National CIO, provided bail and counsel for the defendants. It requires $7,500 to pay for bail premiums, legal expenses and publicity. It must provide for 29 defendants during a trial of several months.

We urge you to aid the defendants by contributing—promptly and generously—to their defense fund. Make all checks payable to the Civil Rights Defense Committee.

(*Signed*) JAMES T. FARRELL
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